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1000 MILES  
WITH THE  
C.I.V.



RCLAY LLOYD

1. Boer war, 1899-1902 - Personal  
narratives

2. Boer war, 1899-1902 -- Hist. -  
Gt. Brit.



C-10  
6384



**ONE THOUSAND MILES  
WITH THE C.I.V.**



٢٣

٦٧



Very faithfully yours  
Henry H. Miller

**ANSWER** The answer is (A)  $\frac{1}{2}$ . The area of the shaded region is  $\frac{1}{2} \pi r^2 = \frac{1}{2} \pi (1)^2 = \frac{1}{2} \pi$ .

2

“*It is a good thing to have a good name.*”



Very faithfully yours  
Henry MacKinnon

ONE THOUSAND MILES  
WITH THE C.I.V.

BY

J. BARCLAY LLOYD

LANCE-CORPORAL CYCLIST SECTION

WITH FRONTISPICE AND A MAP

METHUEN & CO.  
36 ESSEX STREET W.C.  
LONDON  
1901



Very faithfully yours  
Henry MacLennan

ONE THOUSAND MILES  
WITH THE C.I.V.

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**J. BARCLAY LLOYD**  
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1901

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DEAR LLOYD,—I am glad to hear that you are bringing out a Diary of our campaign together with the C.I.V. The personal impressions of an active member of the Cyclist Section, which was so conspicuous a success, cannot fail to interest many outside the immediate circle of the regiment.

Very faithfully yours,

HENRY MACKINNON

GUILDHALL,

*November 15, 1900.*

Harrower 27/2/2015



## PREFACE

THIS story of the South African campaign of the Infantry Battalion of the City Imperial Volunteers makes no claim to be either literary, historical or instructive. It adds nothing to the lessons in warfare, of which so great a crop has sprung up during the year that has passed, and which so many skilled labourers are now occupied in harvesting.

It is simply a collection of records written on the spot, and at the time when the events related happened and the impressions received were obtained ; the relation of the setting forth of these impressions have been guided by no careful afterthought, nor by any collation of facts or inferences subsequently gathered. Had such been possible,

## PREFACE

But whatever be the verdict of others, this at least remains that what was written at the time was a genuine record of things as they then appeared. So let it go at that.

J. BARCLAY LLOYD.

BLOEMFONTEIN,

*October 7, 1900.*

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## **PART I**

**LONDON TO BLOEMFONTEIN. EARLY  
IMPRESSIONS**

**B**



# ONE THOUSAND MILES WITH THE C.I.V.

## CHAPTER I

### ON THE HIGH SEAS

TROOPSHIP *ARIOSTO*, OFF MADEIRA,  
*January 25th, 1900.*

ON New Year's Day we of the City Imperial Volunteers took "The Shilling" and became soldiers of the Queen in serious earnest, but it was late on Friday night, January 19th, that the first realisation of the true inwardness of active service was brought home to us. After that deeply impressive service at St. Paul's, that weird march through the shouting multitudes in the pouring rain, that phantasmagoria of sound

#### 4 1000 MILES WITH THE C.I.V.

and darkness and flashing lights thrilling with the prevailing note of magnitude—the great City, the great Cathedral, the great concourse—came the crude reality of our last night's rest in England. In the basement of the Queen's Westminsters' Drill Hall, without mattress, straw, or blanket, on the bare stone flags, in our war-going kits, we lay down and slept.

Next morning we paraded at six, in darkness dimly lighted by a fitful moon, on the parade ground of Wellington Barracks, to which we marched staggering under the weight of the whole of our baggage for a year's campaign—our rifle, bayonet and equipment, two soldier's kitbags, one for the voyage, the other for land service, as provided by the City, and our cyclists' rück-sack—the capacious substitute for the military valise, suggested by an Alpine climber of the section and approved by the authorities. It was all we could carry.

Then, after breakfast in the barracks,

## ON THE HIGH SEAS 5

kitbags being consigned to pantechnicon vans provided for the purpose, we marched again amid cheering crowds to Nine Elms Station and entrained for Southampton. No man of us will forget the way in which our Mother City said her last goodbye.

It was a damp and dripping serpent of men that crawled in single file through the great sheds at Southampton Docks, up the narrow gangway, and on to the upper deck of the good ship *Ariosto*. She is but a small vessel of about 2,000 tons burden, whose daily round and common task it is to convey emigrants across the North Sea from Sweden, and, at first appearance, far too small to carry the 600 men who are now on board her. Up we slowly crept, one by one, on to the ship and down perilous ladder-ways astern into the dark interior to deliver rifles and valises, and then up once more and off ashore again to hunt and find our kitbags, and back aboard, splitting up into smaller serpents to wander round until our respective messes

## 5 MILES WITH THE C.I.V.

iscovered. And so at last we were ed away, and the ship was full—full etion.

s with a sense of helplessness that we our dank greatcoats and felt hats and for space to stow our kitbags where

id them again, and when after a h...y but much-needed lunch which had been thoughtfully laid upon our tables, we climbed again on deck, and the mooring-ropes were slacked, and we were at last away amid the cheers of those who had come to see us off, and the strains of a single vigorously-blown cornet, which played us bravely out, disregarding the torrential rain, to the tunes of "Auld Lang Syne," "The British Grenadiers," and, finally, "God Save the Queen." It was a noble effort, but was reminiscent of the beanfeast. And so our last farewell was not without its bathos.

That night was a night of horror. As the Lizard Lights, our last glimpse of the old country, glimmered mistily through the winter night, the sea, hitherto but gentle,

## ON THE HIGH SEAS

7

began to manifest an uncomfortable restlessness, and throughout the night the swell increased until toward the small hours the Bay confirmed its character, and the little *Ariosto* responded with a quick, heavy and complicated roll. Can any one who has started on an ocean voyage in winter, or who has made the North Sea passage to Norway, with a snug berth to retire unto wherein to hide his discomfort, conceive the same sensation when so placed as to permit of no privacy or comfort, nowhere to rest a weary head, no seat but a plank on which four may just sit upright side by side, and no beds but hammocks—and not enough of them to go round—which when slung wedged so close together that the occupants overlap, and in which as they swing in serried ranks from side to side with the roll of the ship, the outer man is squeezed tightly against the framework of the vessel, while the inner hangs perilously over the open hatchway leading to the after hold, where now is the sergeants' mess?

## 20 MILES WITH THE C.I.V.

was fortunate indeed that among our section of twenty men, all brothers of the Inns of Court R.V., there several who, in their civilian existence, aching hands, whether as owners of a-going eighty-tonner or the week-end

Thames estuary, such as from Harwich to Burnham and from Burnham to Queenborough or Erith. The realisation of the absolute necessity to health and comfort of cleanliness below decks and of the methods of ensuring it, was therefore present to us, as well as the incalculable boon of a well-trained interior. We, therefore, those lucky ones, in the absence of any orders or regulations, took upon ourselves to restore the horrible and revolting chaos of our own and the neighbouring messes to something akin to decency and sanitation. One of us in the early morning hours made his way forward, and by dint of persuasion both verbal and pecuniary, procured a bottle of carbolic disinfectant and some soda, while

a second raised mops and brushes from another quarter. Having persuaded the sick men to crawl on deck into the cheerless mist and rain, we turned to and cleansed the floors, emptied the sundry buckets and tubs (a hideous process), and finally scoured out the lavatories on our side of the troop-deck and made sweet and clean what was most foul and disgusting. It was a day's work of the hardest, and done solely by those of whom the fear had been expressed in high places that men of our antecedents would be the first to "grouse" and sulk when the real hardships of campaigning were to be endured. And when night fell we sought out and put to bed in what comfort we might the invalids of our section, and turned in ourselves in fair order and sweetness.

Since then, with the horrors of the Bay behind us, and our officers recovered, we have settled down to the routine of troop-ship life, and things are done decently and in order. Men are told off to the necessary

## 10 1000 MILES WITH THE C.I.V.

duties, and the results are inspected daily. Our narrow quarters have grown to us comfortable and homelike, and all are well, happy and jolly. We have sufficiency of parades for inspection of kit and physical drill, and sufficiency of leisure to write or read or learn Dutch or the Red Book, or sing, or do as our tastes dictate. We are men of all sorts and conditions,

"Duke's son, cook's son, son of a belted earl,"

eating, sleeping, and drilling shoulder to shoulder indeed, for there is no room between. Our accents are various, but our dress the same and our duties the same; and it may be noted that even in the throes of agony, discomfort and irregularity of the first twenty-four hours, scarcely a grumble, and never a regret has been expressed among us for the work we have undertaken or the condition under which we find ourselves.

The routine of our living is as follows:— Each mess is composed of eight men, in

charge of a corporal, and the accommodation consists of a plank table 9 ft. long by 2 ft. 6 in. broad, with a single plank on each side for a seat, with 1 ft. of space between them and the seats of the adjacent messes. At the end of the table are ten hooks fixed to the side of the ship to which small articles can be hung, and above are larger hooks from which to sling the hammocks. There are but seven hammocks to each eight men, so one man must always sleep on the table ; but this is no hardship, except when the rats run across him and he happens to dislike rats. The gear comprises one large tub and one bucket, a knife, fork and spoon, a tin plate and a pannikin for each man, an earthen jar for drinking water, a tin can for soup, meat, and beer, and a large tin dish. The whole duties of the mess, both as to fetching and serving of meals, and the washing, cleaning and tidying up, fall on two orderlies appointed from each mess daily. They fetch overnight the joint from the store and the bread or biscuit from the

12 1000 MILES WITH THE C.I.V.

bakery, and the meals of the day are composed of this joint and this bread or biscuit. Coffee is provided for breakfast, and tea for the evening meal, while about half-a-pint of beer is allowed per man for our midday dinner. We have a large tin of butter, excellent Irish butter, for a week's consumption, and last but not least, we are given jam every other day. It is in this jam that the great difference between our troopship fare and accommodation and that of the genuine professional T. Atkins consists. When T. Atkins requires jam he must buy it at the dry canteen, whereas we of the C.I.V. get it three times a week for nothing. It is a great distinction, and we are proud thereof. In all other respects our conditions are identical—indeed during the first night and day we fared far worse than he—though any time-expired soldier will tell you that of all the experiences of his life the worst has occurred during the first few days of voyage to foreign service. We fared worse, for we none of us knew our duties.

## ON THE HIGH SEAS 13

But now that we have shaken down and all are fit and well, there is nothing in the life or in the fare that any man could complain of. The food is a model of simplicity, but it is good food, and there is enough of it. The beef is good, the jam also is good. Bread is running short now, but the biscuits are good ship's biscuits, with no unnecessary live stock.

At this moment as I write, perched on a coil of rope upon the spar deck at 9 a.m., there is a busy scene below me of mess orderlies washing potatoes and greens; a small class of "Ours" is learning Dutch in a secluded corner, from whom the pronunciation of the guttural "g" rings up now and again with a reminiscence of last Saturday night; while on the quarter-deck the sergeants are parading for physical drill. The sun shines brightly but not too warmly, overhead is the bluest of skies flecked with light puffs of fleecy clouds, a brisk nor'-easter crisps the dark blue sea with snowy crests, while in the far distance, broad on the port beam, the

## 14 1000 MILES WITH THE C.I.V.

imagination of those with field-glasses can distinguish the topmost peak of Teneriffe.

We have had our breakfast, bully beef (an extra to-day) and biscuit with the coffee, a beverage warm and thick and sweet, more readily recognised at home in London, and more generally pronounced here as "corfy." We are all happy, living but for the moment, and thinking but little, or rather speaking but little, of what may be before us in the far southern land to which we are jogging comfortably along at a steady but not overwhelming pace of eleven knots or thereabouts.

## CHAPTER II

### "SETTLING DOWN"

ON BOARD S.S. *ARIOSTO*,

*Sunday, February 11th, 1900.*

IT is now the twenty-second day of the voyage to South Africa, and about the time when it was expected at the outset that we should be disembarking at Cape Town ; but here we are still, at least four days from our destination. As far as St. Vincent, with the north-east trade wind to help and her own Yorkshire coal to burn, the *Ariosto* came well up to expectations as to pace, fairly averaging her eleven knots over the twenty-four hours' run ; but from the Cape Verde Islands onwards her speed has dropped to a modest ten knots or under, owing principally to the fact that her furnaces are not

## 16 1000 MILES WITH THE C.I.V.

well adapted to the Welsh coal which she then took on board. Thus there may be many troops starting even a week or more later than we, who will have arrived at the seat of war many days ahead of us, and so possibly the peculiar formation of the S.S. *Ariosto*'s furnace bars may be the ultimate cause which will determine our entire disposition during the war, and all the events and incidents attaching thereto.

The time, however, has not been thrown away, we are learning every day to know and appreciate one another, and to know and understand our officers. Further we are undergoing an invaluable course of musketry and firing exercise, and are thus being perfected in fire-discipline, and are acquiring a thorough familiarity with our weapon as a fighting instrument, and with the voices and peculiarities of our Section Commanders on whom we shall have directly to depend when the actual time for fighting arrives. Similarly, officers and N.C.O.'s are beginning to find out of what their men are

## "SETTLING DOWN" 17

made, to know on whom they can best depend, and who, on the other hand, will have to be particularly watched and nursed on the march, in the camps or on the battle-field. In fact the regiment, or at least our portion of it, is beginning to "find itself" as a Regiment instead of the heterogeneous agglomeration of semi-military and semi-civilian items that embarked at Southampton three weeks ago.

Since I last wrote two events have thrown a certain amount of gloom over the progress of our somewhat protracted voyage to the seat of war. The first of these was the coaling of the ship at St. Vincent, and the gloom thereby created has since been washed off. The second was the process of inoculation for enteric fever, the gloom of which affected the individuals who underwent it for periods of three days or more according to idiosyncrasy. It was after "lights out" on the evening of Sunday, January 28th, that we entered the great coaling station of the Cape Verde Islands, though

## 18 1000 MILES WITH THE C.I.V.

the tops of the mountain-peaks had been visible before sunset, and the leading lights of the harbour were in sight when we turned in. Monday morning broke to a scene of scarcely-suppressed excitement below decks, for we had received orders overnight to parade in our best serge tunics and trousers and our broad hats, in place of our sea-togs —viz., khaki drill and fishermen's caps, for going on shore. So no sooner had the command to "show a leg" been passed around at 5.30 a.m., than the troop-decks were humming with the sound of men disrobing for the matutinal hose; for until the ordeal of inoculation the time for undressing with us was, and now once more is, coincident with the time for bath, shoes and tunics only being removed for sleeping purposes. It may be here noted that among the many thoughtful dispositions for our comfort during the early stages of the voyage, one of the not least appreciated was the arrangement by which the buglers were sent on board the *Ariosto*, while their instruments travelled by

another vessel. We know now what a great boon this has been, because a bugle was borrowed at St. Vincent, and beside the numerous calls which enliven the daily round, the buglers practise at intervals on the poop-deck, just over the companion-way to our troop-deck. Commands, therefore, in the absence of the bugle had hitherto been transmitted by word of mouth, and "show a leg" is the nautical equivalent for *réveille*.

St. Vincent Island, Portuguese colony and British coaling station, is a grand, barren, precipitous mountain group, volcanic, lifeless, save for the dirty, commonplace little town that clusters on the arid beach of the forlorn and desolate roadstead. Across the strait to the westward, giving stalwart shelter against the sweep of the Atlantic, rises another sheer mountain, the Isle of St. Antonio, fertile, we are told, and rich with many fruits, but uninhabited. Why so remains unexplained. Possibly it is not true.

Of the Island of St. Vincent, all that we

20 1000 MILES WITH THE C.I.V.

could see was what was revealed to us by our field-glasses ; for it was gradually broken to us that the order for shore-going had been rescinded owing to the representations of the commander of the British cruiser which lay at anchor in the bay. This was a great disappointment to many, though the majority were consoled by the well-known routine of a tropical port. The swarms of boats hanging on to the vessel's side, manned and boyed by niggers and non-descripts, both black and tan ; the bargaining for bananas, the purchase of oranges, the diving for coins.

But towards evening, as the layers of coal-dust grew thicker and thicker, and penetrated below, and spread themselves over one's kit, one's hammocks and one's food, these amusements palled, and the one hope of all on board was to leave that blighted shore, and get away again out on to the blue sea, where it could be possible once more to wash and be comparatively clean. The weather was clammy, moist

## "SETTLING DOWN"

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and warm, the negroes blatant and odiferous, and the ship from stem to stern and from hurricane deck to lower hold was crowded, dishevelled and unclean. It was therefore with much joy that about midday on Tuesday anchor was weighed and in a tropical downpour, the first rain at St. Vincent for many, many months, we steamed around the sheer precipitous bluffs of the southern entrance to the harbour and out once more into the broad Atlantic.

It was an impressive departure. As we passed through the roadstead we were greeted with cheers from each British vessel, of which some six or eight were lying there, and particularly from the British cruiser and the great Anchor liner, the *City of Rome*, whom we left still coaling with her militia battalion on board on the way to the front. Ere this she is probably well finished with her disembarkation, and her human cargo settling down to their appointed work on land.

That night, marked by a regimental con-

22 1000 MILES WITH THE C.I.V.

cert on the quarter-deck, was our last of health and comfort for a considerable time, for on Tuesday evening at six o'clock a large portion of the battalion paraded for inoculation against enteric fever. A few men had already suffered and recovered, and the sight of them as they crept on deck with old and haggard faces, scarcely able to walk unsupported, had not made anticipation the more cheerful. At home the operation would be uncomfortable, but not formidable ; a feverish night, followed by a day of enforced lying by, with a little pain and glandular swelling on the right side, and some stiffness to follow, and that would be all. But in the heart of the tropics, in a clammy, clinging hammock, slung two feet from the roof of the sweltering, crowded troop-deck, with a rolling sea to prevent ports being opened, thirty-six hours of fever, pain, and debility, may well be scheduled as one of the true discomforts of active service. The kindly help of comrades did all that could be done to alleviate the burden. In each mess of eight four

## "SETTLING DOWN"      23

were inoculated at a time, and the others slept or watched on floor or table or benches, to give a little room for the hammocks of the patients to swing free, and from time to time handed a little water or soda-water to the lucky ones who had previously provided it from the dry canteen, or tried to adjust their blankets in the feverish fits, or to make their hammocks hang more regularly. All that could be done they did, and I have seldom seen or experienced more self-sacrificing kindness extended by others under more uncomfortable circumstances.

When the time arrived last week for the second batch of victims to go through the ordeal, their conditions were rather more comfortable. The weather had grown a trifle cooler, and the sea smoother; the south-easterly trade winds gave us a fine head breeze, and the open ports kept the air sweet. The non-patients were permitted to sleep on deck, so there were less mouths to breathe the air below. And so our patients made a rapid recovery, and all are

## 24 1000 MILES WITH THE C.I.V.

now up and about again, and fit for the routine of duty, which is growing severer daily. As we approach the end of the voyage the collection and inspection of kit forms a necessary item of our daily tasks; and a wearisome one it is, for things get scattered when there is absolutely nowhere to put them, and as all portions of our outfit are identical in appearance, they have a way of getting somewhat mixed. To lose an article of clothing or equipment is a reprehensible action, not to say a military crime, and so the elements of friction are at hand. But serious troubles so far have been surprisingly few, though "things" have undoubtedly been said.

All day long, therefore, during the latter portion of our seafaring we are kept more than fully busy, and the times to wash or shave, much more to read or write, are hard to come by, but in the evening, between seven and nine, we still have moments of relaxation, which take the form not unfrequently of concerts, either informal on

the leeward side of the main-deck, or formal in the presence of the officers on the quarter-deck. These entertainments form a quaint medley and are as much as anything else illustrative of the representative character of the regiment as regards the many classes and stations of life from which the rank and file are drawn. There is no lack of talent. Music-hall songs with "lodger," "mother-in-law" complete, are sandwiched between madrigals and Tennysonian recitations, and sparring matches between the Pride of Mile End and the Pet of Drury Lane form a relief to the sentimental ditties with valse refrain such as are beloved of regular Tommies, and good old cavalier marching tunes are contrasted with the lilt of the modern war song, whose triumphant and bellicose words are somewhat marred by the eccentricities of their rhyme. Here is a specimen :—

"Sons of the Empire marching on to war  
With our brave Colonials going on before,  
C.I.V. will conquer and break 'old Kroojer's' jaw."

The falsity of these rhyming endings are not, however, apparent in practice as the correct pronunciation gives each of the last words as a dissyllable rhyming with "drawer," and when given in vociferous chorus thus, a most effective result is produced. Finally, Scotch reels excellently performed to the shrill accompaniment of two energetic fifers, a concertina solo, or a duet on mouth-organs, complete the miscellany.

And now so near our journey's end, the innermost thoughts of each of us are turning to the land which lies before us. What has happened since we started, what will our destination be?

At St. Vincent we had some indecisive but disquieting news that Ladysmith was still unrelieved, and that the advance of the relieving column had been checked. At the last moment before sailing, however, came the more cheering report that Mafeking was safe. Since then all has been a blank to us, save for a short signal from a passing Union liner to the effect that

## "SETTLING DOWN"      27

nothing of importance had taken place. So all is still dark and uncertain, and we can only sit tight and make up our minds to turn our hands to any duty in whatever place to which we may be sent, and to make the best of any circumstances, discomforts or dangers that may befall us.



## CHAPTER III

CAPE TOWN TO ORANGE RIVER

GREEN POINT CAMP, CAPE TOWN,

*February 19th, 1900.*

WE have now been three days in camp just outside Cape Town. We landed on Friday morning, the 16th inst., from the *Ariosto*, having steamed into Table Bay the evening before after twenty-six days' passage. The little ship went by no means fast, but she kept going without any breakdown or stoppage, beyond the halt for coaling at St. Vincent. She came with a bit of a sprint at the finish and actually ran up to about twelve knots during the last few hours. It was a lovely evening ; and the towering castellated rock of Table Mountain stood out gloriously against the golden green of the sunset sky,

30 1000 MILES WITH THE C.I.V.

with the wreaths of mist that circled round its summit, tinted rosy pink, while the prevailing evening breeze from the south-east blew in great gusts down the harbour and out to sea, bearing with it the smell of land not unlike to that of a London street, in a dusty August, when first the water-cart passes by. What that south-easter means ashore, especially in this arid sandy plain, we now know but too well. As I write by the light of a solitary flickering candle, the wind is raging around the tent and tearing at the well-driven tent-pegs and guys, and the air is thick with clouds of fine blown sand, which fills up with grit food, drink, clothes, boots, hair, bedding and the rest—a most sanitary composition for camp purposes, but somewhat over thirst-producing for absolute wholesomeness.

It was a scorching summer's day when we landed, comparable in feeling and temperature to the Augests which we have borne with for the last few years in London; a wonderful change from the pouring rain and

chilly mists in which we sailed from Southampton a month ago. It was only about half-an-hour's march to the camp from the wharf at which we moored, but we were all glad to reach our tents after the several hours of parading, kit carrying and generally waiting for developments in the grilling heat which are incidental to the disembarkation of troops. Grapes are cheap here, and a penny buys a large bunch of the muscatel-flavoured white grape of the Cape. So we slaked our thirst with these until dinner was ready, and the tent orderlies, appointed as were the mess orderlies on board, brought from the camp kitchens a large pot of stew, floating in much soup-like gravy, the fatty nature of which was tempered by the sand which had so largely entered into its composition. To eat this the service mess tin and the regulation knife, fork, and spoon, were brought for the first time into requisition, and for the first time we ate our dinner in the true camp style, and after doing so had a quarter-mile's walk to the water troughs,

## 32 1000 MILES WITH THE C.I.V.

where also are the arrangements for washing, to cleanse them.

We, the cargo of the *Ariosto*, are now comparing notes on the voyage with our comrades of the regiment who sailed in other ships. Of all that have yet come out, those who left on the same day as ourselves in the stately *Kinfauns Castle* enjoyed the most luxurious passage, while we of the *Ariosto* were the only contingent who fared quite in like manner to the regular troops. We thereby congratulate ourselves, as having played the game thoroughly from the first, and on finding now the life of camp one of comparative luxury, tempered only by sand.

February 23rd, 1900.

As I was writing the last lines my letter was broken off by the necessity of standing by with mallet in hand to save the tent from dissolution. A howling blast obscuring the moon with murky sheets of sand, tore suddenly through the camp, and many tents were uprooted, the officers suffering most.

## TO ORANGE RIVER      33

Now after two days of hard work, rush, and perpetual drive, I am trying again to note a few impressions on board the troop train for the front, in the middle of the Great Karroo. What our destination will be even now we do not know. De Aar is our route, but whether we go right through to Kimberley, as one rumour has it, or branch to the right to Naaupoort to reinforce the troops now heavily engaged round Arundel, we cannot say.

We who landed from the *Ariosto* have had but a short spell of camp life before entraining for the front. Our arrival seemed to mark a crisis in the war. The news we received on board, on the night of our reaching port, was disheartening. Buller's column after its retreat was stationary at Chieveley, no information was to hand from Methuen or Gatacre, while there were reports of minor reverses around Colesberg and Arundel. But the next morning as we marched into Green Point Camp, the other portion of the battalion, who had

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arrived many days before us, returned from their morning's exercise, and the camp rang with cheers as the official news was proclaimed of the relief of Kimberley, the stirring march of French through the Free State, and the general advance and invasion of the enemy's country by Lord Roberts. The new scheme of operations has at last been opened, and opened brilliantly, and the touch of the master hand is at last apparent. Authentic news, however, filters through but slowly, and Cape Town is a hot-bed of the wildest rumours. It is true, at all events, as far as we can learn, that the C.I.V. has already received its baptism of fire, and that our Mounted Infantry who have preceded us have been engaged and acquitted themselves with honour, three of them being wounded, fortunately all slightly. This brings the facts of war very nearly home to us, and before two or three days are passed we may ourselves be under fire, and we shall know then what none of us yet can realise. Another item of regimental

news, which especially affects us members of the Inns of Court, is the sad story we have learned of the death on board the *Garth Castle* of our dear captain and friend, E. Gibbons, one of the smartest officers, keenest shots, and best fellows that the old corps ever possessed. Finding that the opportunity of going to the front as an officer was doubtful, he resigned his commission, entered as a private in the Mounted Infantry of the C.I.V., received his promotion as colour-sergeant, and went out to South Africa with the first contingent. In the early stages of the voyage he developed double pneumonia, and before long knew that all hope was over. His one regret on his death-bed was that he had lost his chance of fighting for his country before he died. He has gone, but his spirit is with us, and has solved the mystery which some of us also soon may solve. To those of us who return his loss will be most deeply felt.

The few days allotted to us at Cape Town

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were to us cyclists indeed busy ones. No signs of our machines and gear, except three solitary cases out of the twenty-three shipped on board the *Gaul* were to be found. So after opening these and fitting up the few bicycles for orderly work, on which some of us have been perpetually engaged, sending and bringing messages and despatches of all kinds to and from the camp, we invaded the docks bodily, hunted up our gear, which was scattered over a wide range of wharves, hidden under tarpaulins, bales of fodder, guns, military stores and goods of all descriptions, broke open the cases, fixed together the machines, amid clouds of coal-dust and crowds of Kaffirs, and at last got all our fighting bicycles completely fitted out and our spare machines stored and overhauled, and all arrangements made to transport them to the front when called for. Meanwhile parades of all sorts had to be attended, infantry drill in extended order, bicycle drill on roads and tracks, kit inspection, drill for pitching and striking camp,

## TO ORANGE RIVER      37

and finally a ceremonial march through Cape Town, when the cheering crowds recalled to us, by contrast of conditions, nationality, climate, and locality, our last march through the City.

Then at last orders came yesterday morning to be ready to leave for the front at half-an-hour's notice, and after collecting the busy messenger riders, who had been buzzing in and out of Cape Town like flies, from *réveille* to midday, we marched out of camp, in fullest Christmas-tree order, with all our belongings upon our persons and our cycles, with the exception of a pair of spare boots, a shirt, and a pair of trousers for each man which accompanied us in the regimental transport.

Here is a short synopsis of our equipment. "On the man" we carry bandolier charged with 100 rounds, haversack full, water-bottle ditto, belt with pouch frog and bayonet, a carbon filter attached to a lanyard, a pair of field-glasses, a knife and a compass. On the bicycle : mackintosh rolled and attached

## MILES WITH THE C.I.V.

rs, rifle on bucket attachment,  
er behind taking rolled great-  
pine rück-sack, with a rolled  
bed on at the back of all. Now  
n to those who frequent the  
on 28 lb. cycles that this would

..  
e with, even on  
good surfaces, and in truth in the loose sand  
of Green Point Camp, mounting in such a kit  
is difficult. But on the harder ground, and  
on the roads, however rough, we have found  
that with all on, riding where possible and  
wheeling the machines in the rough places,  
our cycles will far outpace infantry in much  
lighter order; and, looking at the veldt  
tracks which we are now passing, I have  
not any doubt of a cycle section being most  
mobile up-country. But we shall not be  
carrying anything like this load at the front.  
A great-coat with a shirt rolled in it, with  
our mackintosh in front, rifle and ammunition,  
haversack and water-bottle, will be all we  
shall require. Of course, we could not  
attempt to ride up a kopje, but we may

possibly not be asked to do so. We are most comfortable in the train. In this second-class carriage there are seven men, six on the seats and one in the corridor sitting on the rück-sacks. At night there is a clever arrangement for making up six bunks, three on each side, and the seventh man finds the baggage far more cosy than the sand of the tent floor or the deck of the *Ariosto*, to say nothing of the crowded, stuffy troop-decks. Thus we have had a delightful night's rest, free from the worry of next morning's parade or the getting together of kit. Sunset last night, as we curved through the mountains that surround Cape Town, and sunrise this morning in the open veldt, were revelations of loveliness. The air is fresh and bracing and the heat moderate; we have had a good breakfast and a wash at a wayside station; we have with us stores of matches, cigarettes, and writing-paper, given us at starting by the kindly folk at Cape Town, a deputation of whom came to see us off and wish us God-

40 1000 MILES WITH THE C.I.V.

speed. We are happy and comfortable; we do not know where we are going or what may happen to us when we get there, but we are fit, well, and getting hard, and we are ready to do our best to carry out any orders that may be given us.

## CHAPTER IV

### WAITING ORDERS

ORANGE RIVER CAMP,

*March 2nd, 1900.*

IT is now a week since the Infantry Battalion of the City Imperial Volunteers detrained at Orange River station and pitched camp on the sandy plain about half a mile from the few tin huts that form the town, and about two miles from the bridge which spans the river itself, across which the railway leads on through the historic stations of Belmont and Enslin to the Modder River, and thence by the heights of Magersfontein to Kimberley. We are thus closely in touch with, and almost in sight of, the battlefields of the earlier part of the war, and are encamped on the very spot where the first concentration of

## 42 1000 MILES WITH THE C.I.V.

the troops for the relief of Kimberley was made.

During the past week, while we have been settling down to camp life in the immediate neighbourhood of the enemy, great events have been happening which have entirely changed the whole outlook of the war. Three days ago, on the anniversary of Majuba Hill, came the news of the surrender of Cronje at Paardeberg, within 100 miles of us, while yesterday the relief of Ladysmith was announced.

It is galling indeed to be in the country and so near the scenes of epoch-making events without seeing or taking part in them. But the war is not over yet, and we have the assurance directly from the very highest source that there will be plenty of work for us to do before the end comes.

Our destination at the Orange River was unknown to any of us until we reached De Aar Junction. Orders were awaiting us there to detrain at this camp instead of proceeding to Naauwpoort, as originally intended.

It appears that a number of Boer commandoes were hovering about in the neighbourhood, marauding parties broken off from the forces that retreated from Magersfontein, and but a small body of troops had been left to guard the camp, bridge, and railway—including half a battalion of the Warwickshires, and some Mounted Infantry. About twelve miles up the river is an important ford leading into the Free State, called Zoutpan's Drift, held by some 400 of the Warwicks, and opposite to them are at least 500 Boers encamped. Two of our companies have been detached to positions further up the line to hold small camps and patrol the line, and to each of them one of our section of cyclists is attached. One or both of these runs in to Orange River daily with messages, so we hear news of their doings; how they lie out in turns fully armed in the trenches, how they patrol the line, and how they fared in the torrential storm which visited us a few nights back, when their tents were six inches deep in water, and the men who were off duty

## 44 1000 MILES WITH THE C.I.V.

begged to stand on guard with the others rather than attempt to sleep in the flooded shelters. Thus, though as yet far from the main operations of the campaign, and as yet without sight of the enemy, and with our rifles still reposing in their maiden state of innocence, we are sufficiently in touch with the realities of war to give a feeling of earnestness to the routine of camp duties, and to endow our nights of outpost work on the surrounding heights, and our occasional patrolling excursions across the veldt upon our bicycles, with a sporting sense of warlike actuality. And in fact it has been within very little of some of us coming into still closer contact with the enemy. Yesterday a few of us rode to Zoutpan's Drift, to the camp of the Warwicks, within five miles of the Boer laager, whence outpost shots are exchanged daily, and where some of the officers narrowly escaped capture a day or two since. The party returned just at sunset without seeing anything of the enemy ; but shortly afterwards we learned that a body of

## WAITING ORDERS              45

thirty Boers had been observed on the same road in the course of the afternoon.

Again, on the previous day, our whole section rode to Hopetown, nine miles out, and were caught on the return journey by the sudden darkness which immediately succeeds sunset in this country. One of our party was thrown out by a puncture from a mimosa thorn five miles from home, and a comrade volunteered to walk back with him. They did not get home till after "lights out" at 9.30, and next morning a party of nine Boers were captured by mounted patrols in the immediate vicinity of the Hopetown road. Thus any day we may enjoy the new experience of the greatest sport of all, the sport where the game and the hunter are interchangeable terms.

Beside the novelty of our military duties, the life in this out-of-the-world station is rendered intensely interesting by the strange unfamiliarity of the country and its living inhabitants, and the weirdness of its climatic effects. Glorious sunrises and sunsets mark-

46 1000 MILES WITH THE C.I.V.

ing the rapid change from night to day and from day to night, burning tropical sun, sudden and violent thunderstorms, gusts of burning wind driving before them clouds of blinding dust, summer lightning flashing round the horizon when nights are fine and clear, while overhead shines the wondrous intensity of the unfamiliar stars falling back tier on tier to the infinity of space.

The night of our arrival in camp was spent by us, the cyclists, in outpost duty. It was a glorious night, warm as the hottest August evening in England during the early hours, but chilly and damp with dew before sunrise. It was a pleasure to spend such a night in the open rather than in a stuffy, crowded tent, and the duty was of especial interest. We did not reach our post till after dark, and our directions for opening communications with the next pickets, on a rocky boulder-strewn ridge of kopjes, with no guide but the stars, on absolutely unknown ground, called for all one's acquaintance with rough countries and all one's little knowledge

of wood-craft and hill-work gained in the Alps or Norway, in Scotland or Wales, with the added sense of possible contact with the enemy, and the military duties of alertness and correctitude, both of which were instinct with novelty.

We were fortunate indeed in completing our night duty when we did, for at sundown the following evening there broke a most violent thunderstorm, ushered in by a heavy drift of sand from the opposite quarter. For nine hours the rain fell in one continuous sheet, driven by great blasts of wind. Many tents, whose occupants had not taken the precaution to dig a trench around them or slack their guy-ropes, were swamped through and through, while the unfortunates on outpost work spent the night drenched and blinded.

On Sunday came the welcome mail from home, giving news up to the end of January. At dinner-time, which is at noon with us, the sun was pouring down, and the only shade procurable was in the scorching in-

terior of the brailed-up tent. It was a strange contrast to read of a heavy snowfall in progress in London at the time when the letters were despatched. Chancing to look out at the brilliant sunlit plain, I thought for a moment that I was suffering from a telepathic delusion, for the whole air was full of what seemed to be driven snowflakes, but in a moment the fact became clear that a swarm of locusts was pouring over the camp, whose gauzy wings fluttering in the sunlight produced the exact effect of windblown snow. Yesterday again opened brilliantly, but within an hour of sunrise a small but efficient whirlwind swept round the flank of the camp, just, and only just, missing the guard tent, and whirling a funnel of dust several hundreds of feet into the air, amid which circled paper, empty tins, straw, and other *débris* from the surroundings of the camp. Shortly after followed another storm of rain and wind, which converted all the dry dongas and gullies into rushing streams, and effectively put an end to all parades. The country

around is swarming with strange beasts and creeping things. Lizards large and small dart over the sunlit stones, beetles of weird and uncanny shapes scramble helter-skelter, centipedes six inches long, black, spotted, and repulsive, crawl across the veldt paths, ants great and small run inanely in all directions, while ostriches, really tame but apparently uncontrolled, stalk solemnly across the plains and peck their stony meals. There is some game still in the country, hares and a bird resembling partridges are not uncommon, while in the newly-wetted sand among the remoter kopjes the spoor of small deer or gazelle, and the occasional track of leopard or ocelot or some smaller feline are plainly marked.

The patrolling expeditions across the veldt, on which we cyclists are occasionally privileged to go, are very full of interest. From the tops of the kopjes in the neighbourhood of the camp an immense tract of country is visible. To the north the plains extend to the heights of Belmont and Graspan, toward

50 1000 MILES WITH THE C.I.V.

which the railway runs, marked occasionally by the creeping length of trains laden with stores or troops for the front, or Boer prisoners, British wounded, or refugees from Kimberley returning to Cape Town. To the east and north-east the rocky crags which border the Orange River mark the boundary of the Free State, while to the south extends the broad, barren veldt stretching on to the waterless wilderness of the Great Karroo. The veldt itself is covered with a thinly growing thorny scrub, just rideable for bicycles, but prevalent of punctures to all but the stoutest tyres. The roads and tracks are quite practicable, but very lumpy, and abounding in sandy patches where side-slips are the rule and riding is difficult, and are intersected with watercourses over which the wheels bump heavily. Nevertheless, with strong machines and careful riding, the bicycle is a most useful method of progression, though across country the horse has undoubtedly the advantage.

Our cyclist quarters are now commodious

and comfortable. A few days back half the battalion were detached for a short spell of garrison work at De Aar camp, and to our surprise and pleasure we were told off as a fatigue party to pitch a marquee, to form quarters for the whole section and their mounts, spare parts, and gear. We are therefore all together, and our bicycles and tools are all at hand, and ready to be cleaned, repaired, doctored, and overhauled as occasion requires. The bicycles occupy one-third of the marquee, and their riders, now sixteen strong, the remainder. This allows space for each man to lie at full length without finding his feet on another's chest, and this is luxury indeed after the crowded quarters of the average bell tent; while the extra air space above is grateful and comforting o' nights. Our tent naturally becomes a centre, whither visitors from the outer world are wont to gravitate. Newspaper correspondents from the front bring us intelligence more or less accurate, our own cyclist orderlies from outlying

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camps convey us the rumours that there are rife, while yesterday one of our own Mounted Infantry of the C.I.V. came through direct from the surrender of Paardeberg, and gave us detailed and thrilling accounts of the great surprise march of French from Arundel to cut off the enemy before Kimberley, the surrounding of their army at Paardeberg, the fighting around the beleaguered camp in the bed of the Modder River, and the final night of all when they lay in the advanced trenches within 400 yards of the enemy, while torrents of shells poured into the doomed entrenchments, and every now and again the whole line burst into a hurried blaze of musketry as our troops advanced at different points to command more closely the enemy's lines. Cronje he saw, and Mrs. Cronje, the former the type of an old-fashioned Gloucestershire farmer in a long black coat, breeches, high gaiters, and square-topped felt hat; the latter a pattern of the Boer housewife as familiarised to us

in Miss Schreiner's works. He told us how our comrades of the Inns of Court were among those detailed to escort the vanquished commandant to the presence of our great general. He told us too of the difficulties of transport, of hard days and nights of drenching rain, of wearied horses and short rations, even so that a biscuit must suffice for the meals of a day. And so we felt that hitherto our work had been but play, and that what is to come will be such as will try to the utmost all our powers of endurance, and we know how necessary this spell of training and acclimatisation on the lines of communication is, if we are to play the part we hope to play in the great final struggle of the war.



## CHAPTER V

### INTRODUCED TO THE ENEMY

ORANGE RIVER CAMP, HEADQUARTERS C.I.V.

*March 9th, 1900.*

S TILL our headquarters nominally remain the same. Still are we "guarding communications" at the Orange River. But during the past week the City Regiment has widely split up and scattered abroad, and there have been many goings to and fro of sundry detachments on divers errands, and the camp here is much attenuated, and is inhabited only by the commanding officer, the serjeant-major, the quartermaster's stores, and a few details of the different companies of which the battalion is composed. Of the rest, some have been seeing serious work, others have been engaged in peaceful pursuits.

Two companies at least have faced severe fire, and there have been five men wounded and a few captured by the enemy, but no actual details are to hand, so I can only tell what I myself have seen.

It was a week ago, as I was just closing the envelopes which bore, I trust, my last letters home, and was at the same time scraping the first layer of dinner grease from my mess-tin previous to washing it out at the water-troughs, which are a quarter of a mile away, when the sergeant-major appeared at the entrance to our tent announcing, "Cyclist section to parade in half an hour, with kit fully packed and delivered to the quartermaster, and to proceed at once to Zoutpan's Drift." It was quick work and the weather was scorching hot, but by three o'clock we were ready and prepared to start on the thirteen miles' ride across a fairly good veldt road to the important entrenched position which guards the nearest ford up the river into the Free State.

It was at Zoutpan's Drift, two months

## INTRODUCED TO ENEMY 57

ago, that Captain Bradshaw lost his life, in attacking the farm across the river, then held by the Boers, which now forms the officers' quarters and hospital for the British force that holds the crossing.

Since then the position has been strongly entrenched on the Free State side, and has been hitherto held by 150 Mounted Infantry and about half a battalion of the Warwickshire Regiment, who were under immediate orders for the front. About five miles away is the laager of a fairly strong Boer commando, whose numbers have varied from time to time, but are now about 500 or 600 strong.

To relieve the Warwicks F Company of the C.I.V. were suddenly detailed, and F Company had been away at De Aar for a day or two and only arrived that morning after a night railway journey. And we, the cyclists, were going as an advanced party, and as escort to Major Pawle, of Ours, who was appointed C.O. of the position.

We arrived in due course after a some-

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what trying ride, and were promptly sent across the water by the ingenious swinging pontoon to relieve the Warwicks' sentries on the entrenched kopjes, till what time the infantry of F Company should arrive. They did not march in till late at night. And so our little band, without food and without overcoats, and with no shelter but our waterproof capes, were forced to hold our dreary posts, without relief, for many hours, while the lightning from lowering clouds played heavily on all sides, and the nightly tempest, which is so frequent at this stormy time of year, threatened to burst at any minute. By great good fortune we were spared a drenching, for the rain did not break till early next morning, when our section was relieved. In the course of the same forenoon urgent heliograph messages came from Orange River Camp, "Cyclists to return at once," with intent to proceed forthwith with the flying column to Prieska district. In less than two hours from the time that message was despatched the cyclist section

## INTRODUCED TO ENEMY 59

was back again at Orange River—all, that is, save Lieutenant Hole, the commander of the section, and his senior N.C.O., the writer of these lines.

Grave doubts have been expressed as to the utility of cyclists in South Africa. We were told on all sides before we started, both by those who knew nothing about it and those who might be presumed to possess expert knowledge, that we should not be a month in the country before we were either on foot or on horse. Well, so far these prognostications have not been borne out by facts. And when the expedition to Prieska returns we shall know fully whether our existence as a section, as despatch riders or as a fighting body has been justified. I have no fears as to the verdict.

In the meantime I am going to try and describe a miniature series of operations carried out with complete success by our small force at Zoutpan's Drift. It is interesting as a sidelight upon the larger operations of the war, and also from the fact that

## 60 1000 MILES WITH THE C.I.V.

the skill with which it was conceived and conducted, and in consequence carried through without loss in the most natural way in the world, would in the ordinary course of events leave it without record in the pages of the war; whereas, had the affair been bungled, it might easily have led to a minor reverse of which the world would promptly have been apprised.

The earlier action at Zoutpan's Drift, which resulted in the death of Captain Bradshaw and some dozen men, was rendered famous by the comment made thereon by Sir Redvers Buller, and published throughout the Empire, to the effect that he hoped that our officers would one day learn the necessity of proper scouting. This second action, wherein no casualty occurred, was rendered similarly obscure by the fact that, owing to the efficiency with which the scouting was carried out, the end in view was accomplished without casualty, and no comment from high places or otherwise was required. This is a point which seems to

## INTRODUCED TO ENEMY 61

lead to reflection when considering the true proportions of news from the front.

About thirteen miles higher up the Orange River, beyond Zoutpan's Drift, lies the rich farmstead of Baviaan Krantz, owned by an Englishman named Parkinson. Throughout the war Mr. Parkinson had kept on good terms with the Free Staters, supplying their neighbouring commandoes with such farm produce as he was able. Hitherto he had been left in peaceable possession of his property with the exception of the occasional commandeering of portions of his live stock without compensation. But latterly, since the defeat of Cronje, the Boer attitude had changed, and not only horses and cattle but some of his Cape boys and servants had been seized, and word had been brought him that on a certain day the Boers had planned to loot his whole farm and commandeer himself and all his men. Consequently he sent in with haste to the British C.O. at the Drift for assistance ; and so about 3 a.m. on Tuesday last three-quarters of the small

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force at the station, consisting of about thirty Mounted Infantry of the Worcestershire Regiment, and eighty men of F Company C.I.V., fell in and marched out into the darkness to circumvent the kind intentions of the foe, and to rescue Mr. Parkinson and his whole establishment, and bring them in safe to British territory.

The Mounted Infantry were under the command of Lieutenant Lambton, of the Worcesters, the infantry under Captain Edis, of the C.I.V., and the withdrawal of the farm goods and charge of the convoy was in the hands of Lieutenant Mansell, R.A., a youngster fresh from "the shop," whose length of service dated from his arrival at Cape Town a few months since, and who had been left in command of the few artillery-men and the two 9-pounder muzzle-loaders which guard the kopje at the Drift. The general control of the expedition was in the hands of Major Pawle, of the C.I.V. About 5 a.m., just as the dawn was showing greyly in the east, the Mounted Infantry

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under Lieutenants Lambton and Mansell approached the farm, Lambton spreading out his small command in patrols of twos and fours over the hilly ground, while Mansell with a few men made straight for the farmstead, where he found Parkinson's waggons already inspanned, and the whole caravan of goats and cattle, horses, white men, Kaffirs, and piccaninnies in wild excitement and nearly ready to move off. The excitement and their relief at the appearance of British troops was well justified, for before the convoy was quite ready to start a heavy fire was opened upon Lambton's patrols from a ridge about half a mile along the waggon road, and commanding the route of the convoy back to the Drift, at a range of about 400 yards.

Hurrying up the final preparations with all speed, Mansell soon had the whole caravan under way, and a strange and patriarchal scene they made. Three great waggons led the van, each drawn by eight oxen with their attendant Kaffirs, then

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followed the cattle and the goats, of which there were at least two hundred of all kinds, sorts, and sizes, woolly ones and hairy ones, horned and lop-eared, old billies and young weanling kids, and all bleating and crying and jostling along in one scrambling, piebald crowd. By them marched the Cape boys, the Kaffirs, the Hottentots and the half-breeds, men, women, and children, in all kinds and sorts of costumes, and the whole procession was brought up by a little naked nigger-boy strutting proudly and manfully along, accompanied by a huge baboon, who acted as a sort of eccentric sheep-dog, with lapses of monkeyfied responsibility.

Ere a quarter of a mile had been covered under the shelter of the ridge at the back of the farm the firing became nearer, and occasional bullets began to whistle round the convoy. Mansell galloped off to his sentry posted at the edge of the ridge, and then he found that a party of twelve Boers, detached from the main body of fifty or sixty who were waiting on the further ridge to cut the

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convoy off, were advancing rapidly upon his single sentry, firing as they came.

At the same moment two of Lambton's patrols, mounting the ridge by a lateral gully, appeared suddenly on the flank of the twelve advancing enemy, and about forty yards only from the nearest of them. Thereat the Boers, who were also under fire from a single patrol on another kopje some 1,200 yards to the left, blazed one point-blank volley at the two men and turned and fled incontinently back to their main body. They missed beautifully.

The enemy had by this time fully disclosed their position and strength. The main commando at a farm some two miles off were seen to be entrenching themselves with utmost speed and haste, evidently expecting an attack in force. The advanced body of fifty were holding the ridge commanding the main road from the farm, and firing at the various small parties of our Mounted Infantry who were multiplying their numbers by galloping from kopje to kopje

and opening fire from different points in rapid succession, while the Boer scouts, meeting with more opposition than they cared about, were withdrawing to their main position, and so concentrating their efforts upon the retreating convoy.

In the meantime our company of infantry, advancing steadily over the rough ground, had arrived within a mile of the scene of operations, and were ordered to take up a strong position on the top of a ridge of low hills which ran at right angles to the river and south of the road, and so formed a covering point for the convoy to retreat to screened by the Mounted Infantry.

The problem that remained, therefore, was how to bring the farm produce safely across the exposed plain in front of the Boers' position, and this was cleverly solved by Messrs. Mansell and Lambton. While the mounted men were fully occupying the attention of the enemy the convoy was diverted from the main road and, dragging its slow length across the broken veldt

## INTRODUCED TO ENEMY 67

amid a pepper of long-range firing, which proved fortunately harmless, disappeared down a nullah and round the base of an intervening kopje, and so, after a heavy struggle and many stops, out of fire and into safety. The Boers then left.

When the small forces were collected it was found that though all had had narrow escapes nobody was hit. One man was missing, but he turned up safely later on, having had a heavy fall and been forced to take shelter in a hole till the enemy went home.

That evening the whole caravan bleated and lowed its way into our camp, and till long after dark the pontoon was busy and noisy with the flocks and herds as they were brought across the river with their native attendants; and that night the moonlit glades amid the giant mimosas and acacias, that form such grateful shade and shelter upon the British side, were alive to an animated scene—a lantern slide, as it were, brought straight from “Ole Virginny” or “Way

down upon the Swanee River." Around the camp fires squatted the dusky forms, women mostly and little naked piccaninnies, chattering and laughing among themselves as merry as proverbial grigs, while the younger girls were dancing in the moonlight to the tune of an accordion which wheezed out weird and doleful airs. They do not sing, however, these Cape mixed races, half Hottentot, half Basuto. They can only dance and croon. But they are jolly, happy, and gentle folk, and they simply loathe the name of Boer and pray for his quick destruction. "They beat the women," they told me, "and shoot the men if they express a hope that the English may win."

The warlike incidents of the day were thus brought to a peaceable and pastoral close, but there yet remained a sequel which, on account of the pluck and endurance and smartness which it called into play on the part of those engaged in it, deserves much more than a passing mention.

It appeared that, in clearing out so hastily

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from his homestead, Mr. Parkinson had left behind him the great boat which was used for bringing stock across the river. This was easily large enough to ferry over both men and horses, and as the British side of the Drift was guarded, now the river was in flood, by but a dozen men or so—a fact of which the Boers doubtless would easily become aware—the existence of the boat on their side of the water was an undoubted danger to the camp.

This was at once obvious to Lieutenant H. Hole, the revered commander of our section of cyclists of the C.I.V., who had been left in command of this, the British bank. Taking, therefore, two strong men from the small force under him, and guided by Parkinson's head Kaffir, one Andreas, a smart and stalwart negro, he started off up the Free State bank at 9 p.m. for that twenty-six mile tramp through the night into the heart of the enemy's country to burn that boat. It was a plucky thing to do, and pluckily and smartly was it carried

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out. There was every probability that the farm buildings would be in the enemy's occupation, and the light of the fire would of course betray the work in hand, in which case capture or death was imminent. However, whether the enemy were there or not, they did not betray their presence, and after hours of scrambling and crawling over rocks and stones, bad enough in the daytime but infinitely worse at night, the boat was safely discovered and, by the aid of some long, dry grass, soon set ablaze. And then the valiant four resumed once more their dreary, dangerous tramp, and arrived fairly dead beat about six o'clock next morning, just as anxiety as to their fate was spreading in the camp.

As to the doings of the remainder of our cyclists, who are now engaged on the general staff despatch riding for the column, which is fighting its way through the rebel districts on the road to Prieska, I hope to have detailed news ere long; all I have heard is that they are putting in excellent

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work, that they have been under fire, and that they are all fit and well, and I can only most bitterly regret the touch of fever which detained me at Zoutpan's Drift and prevented me from taking my proper place with them in the very work which we all came out to do.



## CHAPTER VI

### A MILITARY HOSPITAL

ORANGE RIVER CAMP, HEADQUARTERS C.I.V.,

*March 20th, 1900.*

THE past week has been marked by another new but sad experience of the realities of warfare; one which is unfortunately incidental to active service, and which must inevitably be shared by a greater or less proportion of every battalion at the front, not excepting our City Regiment. It has been spent by me in the military hospital at Orange River under the malign influence of an attack of dysentery.

The hospital here is now one of the most important on the whole line between Kimberley and Cape Town, and has accommodation for some four hundred men. It is

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full to overflowing, not only in the permanent wards, but also in the temporary marquees, which have been erected in addition. Since the beginning of February no less than 1,700 men have received treatment there, for wounds or disease, and of these over seventy have died. The majority of deaths have been from enteric fever, the greatest scourge of this campaign, the rest principally from dysentery and pneumonia; but of the many hundreds of wounded who have been attended but one alone has succumbed, and a very large percentage are now once more on duty with their regiments, and more are returning daily completely cured.

Thus from every point of view it is a far better fate to fall wounded honourably on the battlefield before the bullets of the enemy lurking behind their rocky set-ranges than to fall sick ignominiously in camp or on the march before the insidious microbes that lurk still more closely concealed in water, food, or air. Of all these deadly regiments

## A MILITARY HOSPITAL 75

the most terrible of all is that which bears the dreaded title of enteric. It is indeed a marvel to me how any man can of his own free will refuse, as so many have done, to suffer the inconveniences of inoculation, when it is in his power to avail himself of its safeguards. It may not be, nay, it is not, a certain preventive. It may be at least doubtful whether in the event of the fever attacking an inoculated patient a cure is rendered certain. But this at least is an assured fact, that inoculation makes a man less liable to the disease, and that should he chance to contract it, he will in all probability suffer from it in only a mild form, and his hope of recovery is very greatly increased. I was assured by the orderlies of the R.A.M.C. on duty in the ward where I was lying, just rough and ready Tommies, kindly, sturdy, bullet-headed, foul-mouthed Tommies, whose drill is attendance on the the sick, and who possess no medical training, no medical theories, no medical prejudices, and no "bedside manner," that of

the hundreds of cases that have passed through their hands this year, some to Wynberg and some to the grave, no single enteric patient who had been previously inoculated had died, but that in every such instance the disease had developed in its mildest form, and recovery had been rapid and complete. I hold no brief for inoculation. I do not pretend to follow fully the causes which are presumed to render it of value, or the theories on which its efficiency is based, nor to have a complete knowledge of the processes by which the lymph is obtained ; but of this I feel convinced, that no man who has spent a few days in an enteric ward, has seen the sights that are inevitable there, has awakened at night to hear the prayers for the dying being read over a patient lying but a few feet from him, has seen day after day the silent bodies being borne out from the ward wherein he himself lies sick, has heard the incoherent raving of the fevered, or the despairing murmurs of the weak and despondent who

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have lost hope and heart—would ever thereafter be persuaded by the faddist, the theorist, or the prejudiced person to refuse to take any step which might possibly in the smallest degree lessen his own liability to suffer the same horrors himself.

Among the men of the C.I.V. who came out with me on the *Ariosto* there were not a few, principally but not wholly among the less highly educated, who, owing to the doctrines of anti-vaccination which have been so widely propagated at home, refused on conscientious grounds to undergo inoculation. I can only trust that our City Regiment will be kept free, as it has hitherto been, from the horrors of this disease, and that the propaganda of the faddist may not prove indirectly the cause of the death of any of my comrades. It was a bad week, the week I passed in hospital. No less than thirteen deaths occurred, and of those, three men were in ward where I had to lie. The weather was hot and thundery, the ward inconveniently crowded, the flies innumerable and irritating,

the sister-in-charge was sick, the doctor worried and over-worked—but when I left the remainder of the patients were progressing favourably. One poor fellow, a Limerick man of the Royal Irish Fusiliers, down with dysentery, who occupied the bed next to mine, when I came into the ward was as I feared past recovery. He was worn to a mere skeleton and his eyes wore that pathetic deer-like expression that denotes the very very sick. But he cheered up a bit and gradually regained a little strength, and when I re-visited the ward to-day he was another man. It is cheerfulness and good spirits that prove the one great medicine against these two complaints ; despondency kills more than disease. “He fretted himself to death” is the stereotyped explanation that you will hear from all the orderlies, as to almost all the deaths that occur. Well, it is hard enough, Heaven knows, to keep heart up in such surroundings, but if you can you not only cure yourself, but you go a long way to cure your neighbours, and your neighbours

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know it and thank you when they or you obtain their discharge.

There are twelve wards in the Orange River Hospital, each capable of holding five and twenty beds, when full to their utmost capacity. They are octagonal wooden structures with corrugated iron roofs, fitted together so as to be readily dismantled, transported, and re-erected when and where occasion may require. Three or four wards are in the charge of a sergeant ward-master, and each is under the control of an army nurse, who attends during day-time to give the patients their medicines, to the taking of their temperature, and generally superintends the nursing of the sick. The doctor visits the wards twice each day and orders the treatment and diet for each patient, the latter being entered on a blue Army Form, which hangs at the head of the patient's bed by the side of the chart which is marked with the variations of his temperature and other details connected with his case. The whole charge and attendance on

## 80 1000 MILES WITH THE C.I.V.

the sick, in addition to this, both day and night rests with the orderlies of the R.A.M.C. of whom five or six are appointed to each ward. The treatment is good and sound, the beds are comfortable with spring mattresses, and where possible, clean white sheets, a soothing contrast to the hard ground and Government blanket of the tent or bivouac. Each patient on admittance deposits the whole of his kit at the store, for he must bring all his belongings with him or he may never see them again, and on discharge he receives them back again and signs for each item. The whole system is admirably carried out, and everything is done that can be under the circumstances to relieve pain and cure disease.

But even here the serpent of red tape shows glimpses of his trail. For example, in the system of diet. A man may be prescribed rations and extras as certified by the doctor, and rations may be milk, or milk and bread, or ration soup and bread. But if a man is on ration soup for his dinner he cannot have

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ration milk for his breakfast and tea, he must take the coffee and the tea that is provided for these meals, even though milk be prescribed as an extra. Thus to a dysentery patient just beginning to recover, to whom soup for dinner is a necessity, dry bread and coffee (which he may not drink) for his breakfast and dry bread and tea (which is bad for him) for his tea, is all that he can get, and the ration milk in which he has hitherto broken his bread for those two meals is denied him, and no one, not even the doctor, can change the rule or draw the extra milk. Meanwhile, as soon as his dinner is eaten, the extras such as arrowroot, custard, jelly, and extra milk are poured in upon him at a time when he least requires them, and it needs some management and circumspection on the part of the convalescent patient so to regulate his own feeding as to gain the most benefit and the least harm out of the abundance that surrounds him ; for if he eats too much he suffers sadly, and if he eats too little his wasted strength will not return.

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## CHAPTER VII

### EASTER MANŒUVRES

NAAUWPOORT,

*April 6th, 1900.*

A GAIN the C.I.V. have made a move forward, and yet once again we are marking time on the road to the front. During last week the various detachments quartered at different posts on the railway line and in the neighbourhood of Orange River were one by one withdrawn to the Headquarters Camp, and on Saturday, March 31st, we entrained in the earnest hope that Bloemfontein was at last our destination. Two long trains were required to embark the battalion, which was once more complete, with the exception of A and B Companies, who were to join us at

## 86 1000 MILES WITH THE C.I.V.

De Aar on their return from Britstown, and the Cyclists' Section, which had been recalled from the Prieska-Kenhardt Column, but had many miles of the roughest country to cover before it could regain touch with the railway system and so get back to their anxious leaders, who have been like hens without chickens for the past three weeks. They were not comfortable trains that had been provided for us, but they possessed the benefit of simplicity. A handsome saloon attached to each carried the officers; the troops entrained in trucks, twenty men to each truck. Previously the trucks had conveyed coals, and still earlier sheep. There were traces of each still remaining in them. In these we journeyed for a day and a night; the day was scorching hot and the night was keenly cold, but we were pleased and happy, for we were leaving Orange River Camp, of which we had grown most heartily weary, and, with the exception of a possible delay at Norvals Pont, where the new temporary

## EASTER MANOEUVRES 87

bridge was incomplete, there seemed nothing to hinder our procedure to the heart of the matter in hand. As usual, however, we were wrong, but as we did not think so, it was of no consequence.

The drums and fifes of the Lancashire Fusiliers (4th Militia Battalion), who had relieved our detached companies along the line of communication, played us off, to the tune of "Auld Lang Syne," and our answering cheers made us still more thirsty than before, so that the water-bottles filled overnight were in sad need of replenishment before half the journey to De Aar had been accomplished.

It was getting on towards sunset when we reached the dreary, straggling mass of trucks and stores and sidings, derelict engines, and broken-down rolling stock; and here we took our evening meal of tea and bread by the railway side and refilled our bottles at the station tap, while the two trains were joined together after shedding sundry empties, and just as the

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sun went down in a blaze of golden glory, we steamed out complete, on the cross line to Naauwpoort, the corresponding junction on the direct route from Port Elizabeth to Pretoria *via* Bloemfontein.

Sometime in the small hours when the night was at its coldest and our two blankets seemed thin and anything but air-tight, the train crept hesitatingly into Naauwpoort Station and stopped. It continued stopping till the sun was well up, when we fell out for breakfast prepared in the same manner and of the same materials as our tea at De Aar, save that coffee was the beverage and there was precious little of it to go round. There was a water-tap at the station too, and here some of us endeavoured to partially clean ourselves, but succeeded somewhat indifferently. We then returned to our palatial conveyances and wondered when the train would start. We did not wonder long, for the regimental call was promptly sounded and the word was passed along to detrain once more in marching order, as owing to

a breakdown at Norvals Pont, no further move could be made for twenty-four hours. So we buckled on our harness once again, and marched across the rail and past the corrugated tin town, with its pretty little gardens, gay with flowers, and up upon a sandy stony platform, where camp was once more pitched, and where we still remain—that twenty-four hours has lengthened into a week. Each day we stand prepared to move on, but each day passes without anything definite transpiring. Meanwhile the air is full of rumours of all descriptions as to where, when, and how we shall go. The birth, growth, and decease of the typical camp rumour would be a most interesting study. Some arise from scraps of conversation overheard from passing officers, or in the orderly tent, others spring from tales brought in from outside, and others again from the vivid imagination of individuals in the camp itself. They deal with all matters connected with the war—from the great movements of the campaign to the smallest

details of camp life. In the legal profession there is an ancient quip to the effect that there are three degrees of false testimony, to wit, lies, adjective lies, and expert evidence; on active service the similar degrees of comparison may be noted as lies, very adjective lies, and camp rumours. As a matter of fact, you never know what is going to happen till it does, and then it usually happens in quite a different way. However, it seems pretty clear that whenever the time does come and we are really sent for we shall have to cover a considerable portion of the road to Bloemfontein or elsewhere on the march, for during the past days we have been kept hard at route marching, in full order, and general arrangement of kit, so as to be entirely independent of all transport.

Under present conditions nothing is carried upon the person but such things as can be put in the haversack or rolled in the great-coat—a shirt, a pair of socks, and a night-cap form the extent of one's changes of

raiment, a blanket, a waterproof sheet, and a mess tin complete the outfit, which with rifle, side-arms, and bandolier with a hundred rounds, water-bottle, and haversack to contain one's rations and odds and ends, comprises a sufficiently formidable load to carry, but gives little chance of dry clothing after rain or clean linen when a month or two of continuous wear demands a change. We cyclists are somewhat better off, for we can carry on our machines without hindrance or discomfort far more than a man can bear upon his back, and our Alpine rück-sacks can be worn on the back or strapped on the cycle as the exigencies of the situation demand. So we are ready and perhaps a little impatient for the word to go.

Besides the military routine of our life during the past weeks, the life of camp, the morning parades, the marches, attack practice with ball cartridge against typical positions on barren kopjes, guard and picket duties, overhauling and inspection of kits, cleaning of rifles and accoutrements, and the thousand

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and one details incidental to campaigning, there has been another set of duties of which the general world hears but little, but which make up a great portion of the soldier's work on active service, and of which we have had our ample share—these are the various occupations which come under the general name of fatigue. Over night when the orders are read out by the orderly sergeants at each tent door, the men detailed for various jobs for the following day are warned to parade next morning, usually at 5.45 a.m., or a quarter of an hour after *réveille*. This entails, among other things, sleeping in one's boots—as a matter of course one always goes to bed fully clothed—but sleeping in boots is awkward, when the slightest movement at night means collision with one's comrades' feet. The fatigue parties, numbering from a hundred men under an officer and three N.C.O.'s to eight or ten under a corporal, then march promptly off to the scene of operations. Among the work to be done may be included the un-

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loading of railway trucks of various army stores, the shifting of sleepers, girders and rails, the carting of frozen meat, biscuits and other provisions, the unloading and transferring of wounded men from train to hospital and from hospital to train, the shifting and burying of the decaying carcasses of dead horses, the cleansing and sanitation of the camp and its surroundings, the capturing and leading of mules from the open veldt to the camp lines (an awkward job), the transport of provisions by bullock waggon to outlying posts, entailing nightly bivouacs on the veldt, and many other assorted operations concerning the carrying out of which the men detailed know nothing, and the officers and N.C.O.'s probably less, and which have therefore to be approached by the light of nature. In all of these, one and all of us at the base camp have taken our ample share, and it has been intimated to us by the best authority that we have done well. Yesterday the commandant of the hospital here personally paid the highest

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compliment possible to the fatigue party working there moving the wounded and stores. But in truth when a hundred men taken haphazard from a regiment like ours are marched at sunrise to the railway station, directed to a distant siding, shown a train of trucks packed with iron girders weighing many tons, and sleepers, and told to unload them, without cranes, tackle, levers, or any other such gear, it is indeed a problem which requires some ingenuity to solve. However, we shifted them with one slight accident to a man's finger, and the same results have accrued to the other parties similarly engaged. Even the mules came home at last to camp in safety, after having defeated at least one party.

The camp is now humming with excitement; orders have just come round that we move at daybreak to-morrow. The enemy are in force between here and Bloemfontein. We may be in the thick of it before twenty-four hours are past.

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SPRINGFONTEIN, ORANGE FREE STATE,  
*April 14th, 1900 (Easter Eve).*

For obtaining the extreme pitch of physical discomfort, at times amounting to excruciating agony, it would be hard to discover a more efficient recipe than a night journey in pouring rain in a railway-truck, irregularly loaded with rails, iron sleepers, bolts and nuts, the surface of which should be covered so thickly with soldiers in full marching order that they can just maintain a cramped sitting position on their haunches without absolutely falling off. The troops should be thoroughly tired, having spent the previous day in open sheep trucks and the night in bivouac, in the rain for choice, and should have stood to arms an hour before sunrise on the same morning. The men should then endeavour to sleep, and be aroused at 1.30 a.m., still in the rain, instructed to roll their blankets and fix on their scattered equipment in pitch darkness (being responsible for any missing article), and then to march on to the open veldt and lie down by their arms, in the mud,

to finish the night's rest, with the thermometer approaching freezing point, and finally stand to arms at 4.30 a.m. It was in exactly this way that the C.I.V. proceeded from Norval's Pont to Springfontein, four days ago, having detrained at the former camp, *en route* from Naauwpoort the day before; and though they did not enjoy it overmuch, they did not "grouse" excessively, for their hearts were cheered by the hope that they were going immediately to the front. But the days pass by and still we remain here, and our camp is again assuming signs of permanency.

The day after our arrival, our tents were fetched by sundry fatigue parties from the station, and after the necessary preliminaries, the bugle sounded its "G," and the town of tents sprang immediately into existence. We are growing really smart by this time at pitching and striking camp, and were not ashamed to do so in the immediate presence of the second battalion of Scots Guards, who were leaving that day for Bloemfontein. It

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was this very regiment, one of the smartest in the service, who were in quarters at Wellington Barracks when the C.I.V. sprang into existence, and who marked with critical eye our early efforts at battalion drill and heard us march out in the bleak small hours of the 20th of January, when, cumbered with our unaccustomed kit, we left London for South Africa. They have but just arrived in this country with the 8th Division now pouring up to the front, and we, the veterans of the veldt and guardians of the lines of communication, hardened to nights in trenches and treks in trucks, had our turn and smiled as they "groused" to us of their own small discomforts and inconveniences, with which, in Tommy's talk, they were already beginning to feel "fed up." They have the final laugh at us however, so far, as they are probably now at the foremost front, while we are spending our Easter here on the broad grassy plain of the Free State, in peace and quiet, while the drenching rain that set in last night has filled the trenches of

## 98 1000 MILES WITH THE C.I.V.

our tents, and is now oozing genially within them and silently soaking our blankets, coats and all our things.

Easter Sunday has indeed set in with a severity not to be outdone by the bleakest and wettest experiences of our Volunteer marches in the olden times, for then we had at least a comparatively dry barn and plenty of straw to sleep on, and room to turn ourselves. Whereas now, with fourteen in a tent and the water soaking over our mackintosh sheets, it is difficult to sit up and find a place dry enough whereon to write. But to-day there are no parades, even Divine Service in this weather is impossible. To-day is a big budget mail day, and no less than thirty-six mail-bags, which had preceded us to Bloemfontein, came into camp last night, and we have a three weeks' supply of letters, newspapers innumerable, post packages of chocolate, clean handkerchiefs and socks, and, last and above all, "baccy," some of which has escaped from the infinite congestion of months at Cape Town, where ram-

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parts of "Gold Flake" and "Navy Cut" for the C.I.V.'s alone are piled around the defences of the town, and has at length reached its avid destination. So we sit on our piles of dampnesses and eat our chocolate and biscuits, and smoke and smoke, and exchange paragraphs of news from home, in place of the eternal "latest" of camp rumour—and one has news of the League matches, another of the boat race, others discuss the doings of the old corps at home, others, absorbed and answerless, pore over innumerable closely-written sheets, with a far-away look of wishing they were somewhere else. These latter may be presumed to possess sweethearts more or less; they are the first to start the weekly task of home-writing, which gets more difficult the further up-country we get and the lighter and smaller becomes our marching kit. Soon even writing-paper and indelible pencils will be among the articles which must be cast away, for we must go light, and every ounce tells. It is more than likely we shall have

## 100 1000 MILES WITH THE C.I.V.

to foot it to Bloemfontein. Orderlies with despatches are now flitting about in and out of camp. Our mules arrived yesterday, and we have a few carts. All the details left behind at Orange River have joined us, with the exception of our cyclists, of whom, alas! news is scarce. They were last heard of by wire, far away to the distant west, and it must be many days before they reach us, even if they start at once. They are doing good work, but the country there is the worst for cyclists in South Africa, whereas here in the Free State and, as I gather, right through to Pretoria, not only the roads but the open veldt itself is fine going for strong men on strong machines.

Around Springfontein the roads are perfect, and the veldt has a level hard surface covered with short close grass. It is a lofty level plain, and the air is fresh and bright, healthy and life-giving; there are a few ant-hills, but none of the low dead scrub and ironstone boulders of the Karroo, or the loose sand patches of the Orange

River and Western districts, where we have hitherto been working.

Here and there rise isolated kopjes, rather different in character to those of the Colony. The dongas, which in the country we have come from were dry and sandy gullies, filled only by the torrential rain-storms which now and again scour the country, are here replaced by rills of clear rippling water, which at present, at any rate, look like permanent watercourses. But now is the latter end of the rainy season, and winter is beginning, which should bring its bright hot days and its sharp frosty nights, when rain is infrequent, and to the acclimatised the climate is the healthiest in the world.

At present, though the majority of us are getting hard and fit, there is a proportion of sickness in the camp—from damp, exposure, and the living in camps which have been used for months by other troops, where the sandy soil is necessarily more or less befouled, and the blown surface pervades both food and drink. Dysentery has already

## 102 1000 MILES WITH THE C.I.V.

claimed more than one victim from our numbers, and one at least has died of enteric fever. At this, Springfontein Camp, where medical attendance is very hard to come by and there is no hospital, we have several cases of sickness which give cause for anxiety. But in comparison with the general health of the troops on this campaign, our regiment has no cause to do anything but congratulate itself on its soundness and fitness; the greatest problem which exercises our mind is, what we shall carry when we move, and how we shall carry it. On starting from London the Infantry were fitted with the latest pattern Slade Wallace Equipment, including valise, mess tin and great-coat supported on braces, but without the pouches in front, these being replaced by webbing bandoliers which carry a hundred rounds of Lee-Metford ammunition. The disadvantage of this arrangement is that the weight on the back, which the ammunition in the pouches was intended to counterbalance, causes the

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belt to ride up in front. The first alteration in the kit was the removal of the valise which is carried by our troops in South Africa.

Thus the equipment was reduced to braces, great-coat and mess tin, any spare changes of underclothing being rolled in the coat. Now it is further necessary to carry two blankets and a waterproof sheet, and various experiments have been made as to their disposal. There are therefore these alternatives, to carry great-coat and mess tin on back and send the roll of blankets in the sheet by transport, which may or may not be to hand at the end of the march, or, secondly, to carry the rolled blanket and mess tin and to send the great-coat and spare clothing within it by transport. Some of the troops carry one blanket on the shoulders with mess tin and rolled coat under, but this, with rifle, side-arms, haversack, waterbottle, and a hundred rounds, makes too great a load for a man to fight under efficiently, and we must go

104 1000 MILES WITH THE C.I.V.

prepared to fight, and fight at our best at any moment on the march.

So the problem remains as yet unsolved. We, the cyclists, are better off, for we can wheel on our machines and ride where necessary on the march ; while the loosing of a strap will remove the whole of the heavy kit from our machines, and we are ready to go on light quick work whenever wanted. We hope to be wanted very soon, and to have some of our real work to do, such as the section is doing out Prieska way —and the sooner the time comes the better we shall like it.

## CHAPTER VIII

### TO BLOEMFONTEIN

DETAIL CAMP OF THE C.I.V., BLOEMFONTEIN,

*April 21st, 1900.*

DURING the past week the efficiency of the C.I.V. as a regiment on campaign has been put to a far severer test than has hitherto fallen to its share. After three days of continuous rain at Springfontein, which reduced the camp there into a watery maze of trenches, pools, islands and embankments, the orders came on Easter Monday to start that afternoon a ninety-mile march to Bloemfontein. The morning was black and threatening, and at intervals heavy thunderstorms swept across the veldt; but dripping kits and drenched tents had to be packed and stowed, and the mule waggons,

106 1000 MILES WITH THE C.I.V.

which had at length arrived, were loaded with the baggage, provisions and ammunition of the regiment. At last, after a worrying morning and a dinner of the very toughest meat stewed in the most watery "gipper" that a semi-dismantled camp kitchen located in a dismal swamp could produce from veldt-fed oxen slain the same day, the regiment paraded in column, fully armed and equipped for the march, while a pitiless, blinding squall of rain tore across the green rolling plain to bid us goodbye.

It was no mean show, however, even from the spectacular point of view, and no slight object lesson in the military sense, that this thousand men presented, amateurs though they were, setting out for a week's march through a hostile country, fully provided in all respects, and independent of all external transport and supply. In front of all rode two squadrons of Canadian Horse, 150 strong, with a cloud of scouts thrown forward in fan-shape, galloping out over the plain and searching each kopje and ravine that

skirted the line of march. After them followed a company of infantry as advanced guard, moving with flanking parties, connecting links, and all the regulation details as laid down in the red book. Next to these rattled and roared the convoy, waggon after waggon laden with multifarious stores, each drawn by ten moth-eaten mules, and driven by two vociferous Kaffirs, one to handle the tangle of reins, the other to ply the eighteen foot salmon-rod which rejoices in the name of sjambok, and cast his resounding fly over the awkward jibbing team, until at least a mile of the veldt rang like a rifle range on a class-firing day, and roared like the Strand when latest war news comes to hand. Behind this scrambling pandemonium marched the regiment in column or in fours as the state of the ground permitted, and then more waggons, and the rearguard detachment astern of all.

Thus for seven days through the rain and mud and burning sun the column has plodded its way towards Bloemfontein, following the

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line of rail, over which train after train laden with troops and stores have poured onwards to the great and growing camp, where 80,000 men are now quartered.

On the first day, starting at 3 p.m., we made but seven miles. The second, a march of sixteen miles to Jagersfontein Road, began to find the weak spots in the regiment, and about a dozen men fell out by the way, and were unable to continue the march next morning, suffering from sore feet, rheumatism, diarrhoea and other ailments, while several more were evidently kept going through pride rather than strength. And here another and unexpected use was found for the small remnant of the Cyclist Section, consisting now of Lieutenant Hole, his corporal, and three privates. We had had but an easy time of it hitherto, finding a fair track, though treacherous, along the railway lines, and had had, consequently, but little and comparatively easy riding, and much sitting down and looking on as the column, spreading in its entirety over two miles of

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country, crawled slowly on towards its goal. But now that the sick and the lame began to accumulate, it fell to our lot to attend to their kit, assist them to the nearest station, and commandeer the first passing train on which to stow them and send them on ahead to the camp at Bloemfontein, where our active Adjutant had already brought the fortunate A and G companies right through by train, after their exciting experience of real fighting at Britstown. On the morning on which the regiment struck camp at Jagersfontein Road, *en route* for Kruger's Siding, the weather, which had been damp but moderate the previous day, once more opened its flood-gates, and poured and poured its drenching torrents on the unhappy troops. After the column had left upon its weary way we had an hour of the heaviest fatigue work, shifting not only the sick men and their kits, but also a quantity of heavy gear, marquees, officers' stores and our cherished spare parts for the cycles, to the station, and on to a goods train which

## 110 1000 MILES WITH THE C.I.V.

happened to come by. While so engaged two troop trains passed through the station bubbling over with eager Grenadier Guards, just landed and rushed to the front straight from Port Elizabeth. With the second of these was Colonel Lloyd in command, the leader of the Army Cyclist movement, who had taken such interest in our section before we left England, and gave us some words of friendly advice at headquarters on the eve of our departure. It was he, by the way, who told us that for our legitimate work as scouts and despatch riders we should on no account attempt to carry rifles, but ride as light as possible, armed with revolvers, or, better still, the Mauser pistol ; and this advice has been fully confirmed by the experience of our section with General Settle in the west, while we with the battalion have been bound to carry our full kit, rifles, and ammunition, right on to Bloemfontein. Leaping nimbly from the train, which drew up for a few brief minutes at the station, he recognised us at once, notwithstanding our straggling beards

and our three months' old equipment, and asked eagerly what was on, where we were going, and if we were starting for the fight. We had heard of no fight, and said so, and naturally wanted to know all about it. It appeared that the Guards were about to detrain at Edenburg, two marches on, and were expecting an immediate battle with a column of the enemy at Reddersburg, the same commando, 5,000 strong, which had cut up the Royal Irish and captured several guns a few days before. We cheered those dripping, blanketed Grenadiers (for they were going light, in trucks, without over-coats), as they steamed out of the station, and hoped in our hearts that we should be with them before two days were passed. But it was not to be: and on our arrival at Edenburg early the second day after, well in advance of the column, we found that the Guards had indeed marched up against the neighbouring enemy, but that our destination had not been changed, and our weary tramp to Bloemfontein must continue, without the

## 112 1000 MILES WITH THE C.I.V.

excitement of a battle by the way. It was here that we fell in with the main body of the Derbyshire Regiment, the famous Sherwood Foresters, detachments of which we had passed guarding the bridges and culverts on the way up. They are splendid fellows, as smart and useful a lot as we have yet struck. They did a grand bit of work on their way to the front in saving Bethulie Bridge, as all the world has read. They are brigaded with us, forming, with the Sussex Regiment, the Camerons and ourselves, the 21st Brigade, whose organisation is now being completed. It was a kindly act of theirs to send out their band that afternoon to play our regiment in to the tune of the "Boys of the Old Brigade." Those last two days had been terribly trying ones.

The march from Jagersfontein to Kruger's Siding was made in the most pitiless of downpours, the next, a good sixteen miles to Edenburg, in burning sunshine and the most clinging, binding mud the country could produce. A march of fifteen or six-

teen miles may sound to the ordinary civilian who goes, laden with a walking stick for his country tramp, but a paltry stroll. But to a regiment in column of route in full marching order it is a very different thing.

At 5.30 *réveillé* sounds, and the men awake unwillingly, though probably more than a quarter of the regiment has been out on picket or guard duty all night, or has stood to arms at half-past four. Spare blankets and extra kit must then be packed and stowed on the waggons and rifles cleaned and rubbed up before "the cook house" call announces breakfast, which means a ration biscuit or two of the "doggy" order, about half a pint of lukewarm coffee and perhaps a piece of bully beef, hoarded from the previous day's dinner, or may be served out in advance. Then the tents must be struck and rolled, stowed in their sacks, with all their respective mallets and pegs—a work of at least half an hour for six men to each. Then there are fatigue parties to clean up camp, gather all scattered scraps

114 1000 MILES WITH THE C.I.V.

of food, paper and refuse, and bury or burn them, while the tent orderlies must scour the "dixies" or camp-kettles and fetch them full of fresh water for the cooks. Further, every man must fill his water-bottle before parade, on pain of punishment from the authorities at the time and from parching thirst later on in the day, and at many of our camps the only well, spring or pump, was a mile or more from the encampment. Kit and accoutrements must be overhauled and adjusted, and at last, after three hours of the hardest labour, the regiment parades ready to start the work of the day, each man carrying his rolled blanket, enclosing a change of under-clothing, his mess tin with the sacred emergency ration within it (a heavy tin of compressed food which it is anathema to open except in the direst extremity), his rifle, and a hundred rounds of ammunition in his bandolier, his full water-bottle and his haversack containing his little all of private stores; while field glasses, pocket-knives, filters, compasses, wire clippers, &c., are but

small details, but they do not lighten the load.

And then again at the end of the day's march, when the regiment, called to attention, straightens itself up and swings into camp trying to look as though there were no sore heels or strained sinews, no parched throats or aching insides, the early morning work must be again begun in reversed order, waggons unloaded, kits unpacked, tents pitched, water fetched, guards and pickets posted for their night's watch, before the half pint of tea which should legitimately be a pint, but is not, is served, and the sudden night has fallen on the half-finished task. No wonder then that these days of wet and mud were too heavy for several of our regiment, and that each morning a few sad and sick had to board a friendly train and seek rest at Bloemfontein Camp before the regiment marched in, and no wonder that the cheerful strains of the Derbyshire band were more than appreciated by the tired troops as they helped them into camp over

## 116 1000 MILES WITH THE C.I.V.

the last two miles of the heaviest march of the week.

GLEN CAMP, HEADQUARTERS OF C.I.V.,

*April 26th, 1900.*

I wrote my last notes two days ago at Bloemfontein, where the battalion marched in on Monday, 22nd inst., doing the last twelve miles from Kaal Spruit in one stretch and reaching camp in first-class form about 1 p.m. After leaving Edenburg the weather greatly improved, and we are hoping ever against hope that at last the belated rainy season is at an end, and the true winter weather which has been due for weeks has properly set in, with its bright hot days and its cold and bracing nights. Such we have experienced for four days now, and the reeking quagmire with impassable tracks, which formed the groundwork of the immense camping ground around the Free State capital, was yesterday, when we left, a smiling close-cropped pasture with smooth and even roads, over which a lightly laden bicycle could travel delightfully.

Personally I had a very pleasant experience of this change of conditions, for when leaving Edenburg it fell to my lot to take charge of a small party of sick men, and an officer of Ours whose health had completely broken down, and conduct them by train to Bloemfontein. By great good luck the first to come through Edenburg station was one of those palatially fitted hospital trains of which so much has been heard at home. It was full of beds, mattresses and hospital stores for the camp, but still most comfortable cots were found for our disabled men, who hailed them as a heavenly rest after their heavy struggles through the mud and wet, and the medical and nursing staff of the train were most kind and attentive to their unexpected charges. Slowly the train crept along up the long rising gradients to Bloemfontein, and it was late in the afternoon when we ran through the crowded encampments and entered the station of the capital. Here there were ambulance carts in waiting, ordered forward by the chief medical officer

## 118 1000 MILES WITH THE C.I.V.

by telegraph ; after some delay and deliberation as to where we should go, our two mule-drawn vans trotted off through the broad tree-lined streets and the wide market-place of Bloemfontein, which looked in real life exactly as it has appeared in pictures in "all the illustrated papers," and so out into a hopelessly impassable swamp of deeply trodden mud, just as the sun set and the black moonless night swept over the land. It was scarcely pleasant to lift one's heavy machine laden with rifle and full marching kit, weighing over eighty pounds all on, and try to run through the knee-deep mixture to keep the cart in sight, for perhaps two miles, but it was distinctly warming work, and the cyclist escort of one was much relieved when the carts drew up at the lately pitched Portland Hospital, newly arrived from Rondebosch, with its roomy "tortoise" tents, its comfortable beds, and perfect arrangements for the comfort of the patients. Here again our little batch of invalids formed almost the "first customers," and the utmost care and

attention were received by them, though the greater part needed but a night's rest to refit them for light camp duties. Next day, a lovely morning, I set out for the town with the intention of finding the camp where our two stray companies A and G had for the past fortnight taken up their peaceable abode ; and after much inquiry succeeded in tracking them to their lair. Then getting a compass line, I struck out across the veldt and hit off the hospital once more just in time for dinner. That dinner was a dream ; well-cooked steak and kidney-pie, and milk pudding and jam, sent me from the medical officers' mess. It sounds simple enough, but it was nectar and ambrosia after the bully-beef and biscuit and the needlessly short rations of tea and coffee on the march, and it was eaten at a table by one sitting on a chair ! In the afternoon the strength of our machines was well tested as carriers of goods, for three men's complete kits travelled on mine across the baked ridges and furrows of the now drying camp-tracks, while the four convales-



## 120 1000 MILES WITH THE C.I.V.

cents came slowly across in bee-line to our camp beside the railway, two miles away from the town. Sunday was a very busy day, and withal a most interesting one. Another batch of sick of Ours arrived and had to be met, and transport to the camp had to be found for them. The latter meant much wandering amid miles of mud, stores, sidings and negroes, piles of fodder and ammunition, stacks of jam and biscuits in their rectagonal boxes, and acres upon acres of bully-beef. It was at length discovered at a huge waggon of pantechicon-like appearance, forming the headquarters of the Transport Department. Then the great and growing mail for the regiment was unearthed at the Post Office, and arrangements set in motion for its delivery before the men marched in ; a good scheme for soothing the tired, thirsty and hungry troops on their arrival. Then on return to camp there were despatches to carry to the outlying camp on Sussex Hill, a strong entrenched position to which A and G Companies had been

suddenly ordered the previous night. There were rumours of a great battle proceeding in full view of that coign of vantage—no time was lost in carrying those despatches! It was a four-mile ride over a bad track amid many dead and putrifying horses, and up a steep hill. But when the top was gained and the broad plain beyond opened out to sight, there at last was happening what we all came out to see and do, though ten miles away. A battle was indeed in progress in full sight. A Cavalry brigade, the re-horsed heroes of French, was pouring across the open country to the right, along the centre crawled mile on mile of waggons with stores and ammunition, batteries of artillery and ambulance trains. Far away on the left front two or three batteries were heavily engaged, and the shrapnel shells were bursting in rapid succession all along the distant sky-line of the hills that lay from the road to Thaba 'Nchu southward towards Reddersburg, and the line along which we had marched. That battle continued all that day and all the next, and

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on the third the Highland Brigade marched out close by our camp in the early dawn to take their part in it. What the battle was called, what was the force and position of the enemy, or what the result, we still know not. Rumours have it that French from the north and the 8th Division from the south, with whom our friends the Grenadier Guards are numbered, have, with other troops under General Rundle, enclosed 15,000 of the enemy, and are sure of capturing them as Roberts and Kitchener did with Cronje at Paardeburg. But rumours, to put it mildly, are apt to be misleading. You in England will know all about it long before we can hear the truth, for yesterday, after one day's comparative rest in camp, the regiment was once more upon its northern march, arriving last night at Glen, where we bivouacked for the night. Maybe we stay here some time, till our brigade is completed, maybe we shall be fighting very soon, for the enemy is all around us. Meantime we are having another day of partial repose, and are glad thereof.

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At Bloemfontein we were reviewed by Lord Roberts, our Honorary Colonel, who addressed us in those clear-cut, soldierly tones of which we have so often heard, but which have hitherto been to most of us, as to the rest of the world in general, more as pages of contemporary history than as living personal facts. Indeed it is thus with many of the experiences which we have lately been going through. Things that were matters of the short story, the snap-shot illustrator, or the descriptive correspondent, are things of our everyday life.

To-day we bathed in the dirty upper waters of the Modder River, beneath the broken girders of a blown-up bridge. Yesterday we were marching without any food and but a drain of water from early morning till nearly sunset. To-morrow we may be in action with the Boers, whom we hear are being driven north from their positions at the Waterworks of Bloemfontein.

And so day after day goes on, and we are hardening up to the life and language of

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Thomas Atkins on campaign, with only the fitful mail from home to remind us that our whole life past, and perhaps future, has been otherwise.

**PART II**

**THE GREAT MARCH**



## INTRODUCTION

THERE are, as all fighting men must realise who have ever been engaged in an action of any magnitude, few more difficult things for any individual soldier to grasp (even if it should happen to occur to him at the time to try) than the part which he personally, or the unit, whether brigade or battalion or company or troop, of which he forms an insignificant item, is really playing in the general scheme of operations. It is only by collecting the experiences of others, and by a careful study of the topography of the fight and of the results obtained thereby, that an approximate sense of the true proportion of things can possibly be gathered.

Similarly when first a regiment is attached

to a brigade, or the brigade itself made part of a marching column, it requires a very considerable amount of patient inquiry and research before a humble private or N.C.O. can intelligently collect the salient facts as to the composition of that larger unit, the respective grades and positions of its leaders, and the nature of the duties allotted to it. As a matter of fact he usually remains from first to last in blissful ignorance of those to him so unimportant details. It is therefore to the trained intelligence and the wider scope of observation of the war correspondent that the folk at home would naturally look for lucid information on such matters, rather than to the intermittent letters of friends at the front, hastily written as they must needs be, under circumstances as unfavourable as possible for anything but the barest record of immediate experiences. Thus it can scarcely be wondered at that one's own earlier-recorded impressions of the inclusion of our regiment in the 21st Brigade, and the absorption of the whole into "Hamilton's

Force," officially known in its younger days as "The Winburg Column," fail adequately to appreciate or explain the composition or leadership of that essentially complete and carefully organised army.

And now that the home newspapers are coming to hand, teeming with the swiftly-telegraphed news of Lord Roberts's great advance, it is naturally a little disappointing to find how widely the very war correspondents themselves were astray both as to the disposition of our force and the nature of its mission. At one time we read in influential morning journals with immense circulations of Ian Hamilton's Cavalry doing brilliant work near the Klein Vet River, at another of Bruce Hamilton's Infantry "occupying Winburg and the country for many miles to the north," while more misleading still is the "news" that the "City Imperial Volunteers" were "covering Roberts's right flank at the time of his occupation of Brandfort."

As a matter of fact the majority of these

## 130 1000 MILES WITH THE C.I.V.

estimable news-purveyors had, as was only natural, attached themselves to the central army led by the Great Chief himself, which was advancing along the direct route of the railway, steadily, solidly and swiftly, but practically without opposition, and with ample intervals of repose at Bloemfontein, at Kroonstad and elsewhere. Our never-resting column meanwhile on its right flank sped continually to and fro over a broad fifty-mile belt of country, ranging the ground as closely as the well-trained setter covers the broad stretches of moorland ahead of the guns, but always pushing northwards at a pace which kept us on a level with the whole general advance, whatever might be the head of game that had to be located, put up and accounted for *en route*. Nor was it until the whole of our force had been hurried from the right flank to the left of Roberts's army, and crossed the railway to the westwards at a spot within a day's march of the Vaal River, that the responsible purveyors of war intelligence began to appreciate its true nature;

and not until the Vaal was crossed and the battle of Doornkop in the West broke down the last obstacle to the peaceful occupation of Johannesburg, did "Hamilton's Force" become scheduled as an entity of importance in the eyes of the people at home. By that time, of course, everybody was supposed to quite understand all about the details of which it was composed, or at any rate, in view of the rapid march of events, no time or space was available for explanation. It seems to me, therefore, that in order to render coherent and intelligible these random records of the doings of the C.I.V., written for the most part on the open veldt, during our few brief breathing spaces amid the hard work of very active warfare, it is at least necessary to append some more precise account of the formation and composition of that not insignificant factor in the conduct of the campaign, of which for so long we have formed an integral part.

And now that the "Old Brigade," as the cheerful band of the Sherwood Foresters so

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musically dubbed us, is broken up and dispersed, and the whole force is distributed far and wide in the new shuffle of the military pack for the last great deal of all, one can look back from the security of a convalescent ward upon the doings of the past, and get a clearer view of details which at the time were difficult and obscure.

The following, then, as far as I am able to ascertain and recall, is a brief summary of the facts and circumstances connected with the formation and composition of "Hamilton's Force":—

On the very day on which the C.I.V. were completing their ninety-four mile march from Springfontein to the capital of the Free State, a strong force, including the 19th Infantry Brigade under General Smith-Dorrien, together with a large body of mounted infantry, cavalry and artillery, the whole being under the command of General Ian Hamilton, marched out from Bloemfontein in an easterly direction and at once became involved in a series of arduous

and stubbornly contested engagements with the powerful and well-equipped commandoes of the enemy, who had occupied the Waterworks, and from their line of immensely strong positions were continually harassing our advanced outposts on that side of the city. For a whole week fighting went on without intermission, until at length the main body of the enemy had been pushed eastwards towards Thaba Mountain, though considerable numbers still retained their position adjacent to the railway-line, and were threatening the safety both of the line itself and of the comparatively small bodies of our troops who guarded it from Glen Station northwards to Karree Siding.

Meanwhile, after a pause of a day at Bloemfontein, the C.I.V. were hustled on to Glen, where within forty-eight hours they were joined by the Cameron Highlanders, the Sherwood Foresters (1st Battalion Derbyshire Regiment), who had already put in some excellent work in saving Bethulie Bridge, and the 1st Battalion of

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the Royal Sussex Regiment. The four battalions thus brought together were now united as the 21st Infantry Brigade, under the command of General Bruce Hamilton, and their work as such began forthwith. All necessary arrangements as to staff and transport were rapidly completed, and the newly-formed brigade at once set out eastward to reinforce the troops under Ian Hamilton, who were still heavily engaged in the neighbourhood of Thaba Mountain.

On the second day our progress was considerably delayed by the active proximity of a body of the enemy detailed, doubtless, for that very purpose. And thus it was not till the end of the third day's march, a long stretch of eighteen miles, during which the force was strengthened by two batteries of Field Artillery and our famous 5-inch "cow-guns," and came in touch with the brigade of Cavalry under Colonel Broadwood, also moving to the east, that we finally joined hands with Ian Hamilton's column, just in time to receive a few parting shots from the

enemy as they finally vacated the positions so stubbornly held during several days' hard fighting.

It was in the course of the last engagement that Captain Towse, of the Gordon Highlanders, the most noted of the four battalions that composed the 19th Brigade, won his Victoria Cross and lost the sight of his eyes by one of those deeds of heroic gallantry of which this campaign has afforded so many brilliant examples. His brother is one of us, a private in the C.I.V., and at home a cyclist in "The Artists."

And so at last, in a fertile, peaceful valley, well cultivated and well watered beyond the wont of Free State farm-lands, flanked to the east and south by the rugged heights of the Thaba hills, and to the west and north by the rolling downs over which for so many weary miles our future course now lay, the army of which we were to form a portion finally completed its muster-roll.

And though from time to time upon the march we were joined for a while by other

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bodies of troops, both small and great, whose comings and goings were accurately known only to those in high places, the composition of the column itself remained practically unchanged until, after our entry into Pretoria, the 19th Brigade, which had borne the heat and burden of the first week's heavy fighting, was detached for other duties, and the 75th Field Battery also ceased to be with us. With these exceptions the force remained intact through all the marchings and counter-marchings in the neighbourhood of Pretoria and during the whole of the long tramp southward; until at Heidelberg the command changed hands, and General Ian Hamilton, its eponymous chief, was forced by an unfortunate accident to place his still compact and efficient, though weary and ragged army into the able hands of General Hunter. And it was but a few days later, at Frankfort across the Vaal, that the force as such was finally disintegrated and closed its existence as a complete and independent military unit.

Here, then, to conclude, is a synopsis of the items of which this force was composed. Infantry : The 19th Brigade, commanded by General Smith-Dorrien, including a most smart and efficient battalion of Canadians, the Gordon Highlanders (1st Battalion), whose warlike deeds win always such ample recognition ; and the 21st Brigade, the composition of which I have given above, under General Bruce Hamilton—some 8,000 men in all ; the whole being under the general command, for tactical purposes, of General Smith - Dorrien. Cavalry : The Brigade commanded by General Broadwood, with whom are also two or more batteries of Horse Artillery. In addition to the swift 12-pounders of the R.H.A., who accompanied the cavalry, we rejoiced in the consoling presence of the two 5-inch long-range garrison guns, drawn by oxen, and familiarly known as “cow-guns,” of an older naval pattern than the famous “four-point-sevens,” but comfortably carrying huge charges of lyddite with great accuracy to

## 138 1000 MILES WITH THE C.I.V.

immense distances; a battery of recently-imported Vickers-Maxim 1-lb. quick-firers, commonly called "Pom-poms" for short; and three most estimable batteries of Field Artillery, to wit, the 81st, 82nd, and 75th, the accuracy of whose practice and the smartness of whose manœuvres was the theme of universal admiration on our side and of dissatisfaction and dismay to the enemy. A composite brigade of Mounted Infantry, together with an assorted selection of invaluable Light Horse and Colonial Scouts—the eyes and ears of the column—finally completed the muster of the force, and immensely added to its efficacy.

Thus, taking the above rough catalogue to fairly represent, as I believe it does, the facts of the case, the complete fighting strength of the column, so far as I am able to reckon it without any official figures to guide me, comprised the Xenophonial total of 10,000 men, apart from transport and convoy, and not including any of the additional contingents of horse and foot

who were attached to us and shared our fortunes at different stages of our long northward march.

Such, then, was "Hamilton's Force," the army of which the City Imperial Volunteers formed a not insignificant part—an army which, exclusive of the seven days' strenuous fighting in the vicinity of Bloemfontein and without reckoning the many minor engagements, cavalry skirmishes, and rear-guard actions that formed a running accompaniment to its uninterrupted progress, fought and won four serious battles, in each of which it was necessary to expel by direct assault a formidable enemy, well supported by artillery, from positions of great strength and which severally in their results had an important bearing on the whole conduct of the campaign.

Of these, the first engagement near Welkom split the enemy's united forces into two disorganised bodies, and by clearing the difficult drifts of both branches of the Vet River, threw the road open for the

## 140 1000 MILES WITH THE C.I.V.

occupation of Winburg. The second, at the Zand River, so thoroughly demoralised the strong Boer commandoes under Lemmer and Grobelaar which were barring the road to Kroonstad, that they were incapable of offering any further opposition to the peaceful occupation of that city. The third, the battle of Doornkop, by drawing to the west and finally dispersing the majority of the effective garrison of the town, opened the gates of Johannesburg to Lord Roberts's army. While the fourth, and last, namely, the two days' fight at Diamond Hill, cleared away from the neighbourhood of Pretoria the still formidable army of irreconcilable stalwarts under Louis Botha, who were threatening it from the east.

In addition to this the column seized and occupied upon its march five important towns, rallying points each one for the enemy's forces, namely, Winburg, Lindley, Heilbron, Heidelberg, and Frankfort, beside sharing with Roberts's column in the capture of Kroonstad, Johannesburg, and Pretoria.

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And finally, it marched from start to finish over 600 miles of hostile territory without a single halt of more than three days' duration, and that not until the occupation of Pretoria was a *fait accompli*. It is surely a record of which any body of troops may, I think, legitimately feel proud.



## CHAPTER IX

### THE ENGAGEMENT AT WELKOM

CAMP WINBURG,

*May 6th, 1900.*

“WHEN Lord Bobs catches hold of you he'll make you march.” So said one at Edenburg, an old rejoined Reservist of the “Sherwood Foresters,” who had been with Roberts in India. He knew the man. Roberts has caught hold of us and he has made us march, and we are still marching. On the afternoon of April 29th the 21st Brigade, comprising the Cameron Highlanders, the 1st Battalion of the Derbyshires, the Sussex Regiment, and us, the City Imperials, struck camp at Glen Station, making due east across country, and since then, with one day's interval, we

have been steadily marching onward, nor have we been under cover either in house or tent since then. We have covered eighty-five miles in six days and a half, we have fought one battle and been on the verge of two others, and now we are resting for one morning only, expecting to move forward again this afternoon and march well into the night to make up for lost time.

To Winburg our mileage has been as follows : On the evening of April 29th, eight miles ; on the 30th, eight miles only across very rough ground in extended order, with a battle proceeding on our left ; and on the 1st of May, eighteen miles to Hensfontein under the northern slope of the Thaba Mountain, where for the first time we came under fire. Then a day of rest, while the great column of 25,000 men, swelled to-day to 40,000, was grouped and arranged. Then the whole huge force of cavalry, infantry, light horse of all descriptions, horse-gunners, field-gunners, two great bullock-drawn naval 5-inch cannons, with miles and miles of

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mules and waggons, its ambulance carts, its droves of oxen, its hooting Kaffir drivers, and us four lonely cyclists, heaved itself along towards the north, and for three days has kept up its solid seventeen miles daily, marching and fighting and driving all opposition before it.

Yesterday afternoon, an hour before sunset, it swept triumphantly into Winburg, the second city of the Free State, complete and self-contained in every item.

Over the rolling veldt went the mighty column, pouring over ridge after ridge, tramping through the short, tufty grass, which now affords splendid pasturage for the beasts, now following the fine veldt roads, now striking straight across the hills, so that to an observer standing on the summit of one of the higher folds of land it seemed that across the whole country, as far as eye could reach from south to north, a gigantic hydra-headed serpent creature was rushing with tentacles outspread fan-wise in front, touching and feeling and

searching every knoll and summit, brushing aside with its fiery breath every dangerous obstacle, but never stopping, never pausing in its onward move.

So across the breadth of the land this army has marched, and it is but one of three

least which the great brain of our leader has poured out simultaneously to clear this wonderful land once for all of war and strife, to open its fertile slopes and grazing lands to Northern British civilisation and good government. A great grazing country it is; here closely resembling Devonshire, there for all the world like the Sussex down-lands or the classic slopes round Epsom racecourse. None of us who have fished or hunted on Dartmoor could fail to note the strange likeness to Tavy-Cleve in the rugged glen at Welkom across which the whole force rattled, crashed and roared at daybreak yesterday morning, passing without opposition through a position where a single regiment with a few good guns could have checked an army for hours.

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But the terror of our artillery fire and the vastness of our oncoming force had seemingly shaken the enemy's stopping powers on the previous day, and his convoys were in full flight before us. Again at sunset this evening there came a vivid impression of Epsom Downs on Derby morning, when the crowding convoy of horses, mules and waggons, many with their fluttering ambulance flags, and the troops grouping themselves on the rounded slopes, with no glitter of arms or glamour of scarlet and gold, with more and more always pouring down the dusty road across the southern fold of land, gathered in increasing numbers on either side of the sunny valley and sloping hill-tops before the sudden night should fall and the scorching heat be changed to the bitterest starlit cold.

It was on Friday, May 4th, that the City Imperial Volunteers as a complete infantry regiment took part in their first real battle. For some days previously our march had been to the tune of continued artillery fire,

148 1000 MILES WITH THE C.I.V.

more or less distant. On the day after the start from Glen a smart engagement was taking place just beyond the ridge of the hills round which we were marching, and two shells came flying near enough for us to hear their angry whistle, and would have fallen among us but for the friendly top of a kopje "in between."

The next day we ended our eighteen-mile march in battle array, and, as we topped the fold of land that led to the foot of the great Thaba group of hills, we were just in time to receive a few parting shots from the rear-guard of the retreating Boers, who had been engaged with the Highland Brigade and a large force of cavalry and artillery for forty-eight hours previously. But it was not till three days later that we had our first taste of real fighting.

In the dark of the early morning, before the sun had begun to show its light, the whole Winburg column left its nightly bivouac and marched across the open rolling veldt till the mountains that flanked the

## ENGAGEMENT AT WELKOM 149

rugged glen, where the enemy was expected to rally, came clearly to view. Six miles we covered at a good round pace, with the whole cavalry division in front and flank, and the leading infantry brigade extended in open order across the plain ; and then, about nine o'clock, boom ! and out from a long, flanking, flat-topped kopje on our right burst a cloud of blue smoke, and high over the centre of the cavalry in our front the shrapnel shell from one of the famous Creusot guns broke into a ring of vapour, which went floating away like a little puff of pure white cloud across the perfect blue of the sky, and the battle had begun. It was a fight most tremendously interesting from a spectacular point of view. The operations were for the most part visible and comprehensible throughout the day. On our right extended the long, flat-headed spur dotted with a few scattered bushes, from a hollow in which the first shell was fired. On the left of our advance was a range of rounded downs, sloping up from the

## 150 1000 MILES WITH THE C.I.V.

open veldt and narrowing inwards at the other angle to meet the farther end of the opposite spur. Between these two ranges ran a V-shaped plain broadly opened to the veldt, but closing in towards the open pass through which our direct road lay, and rising always till the narrowest part was reached. On each of these ranges the enemy was posted in strength, and on the right was one of his big guns; on the left the bulk of his artillery, with his riflemen posted along the ridges so as best to command the approach of our advancing force. As to our own disposition, as far as a mere combatant could possibly judge, it was as follows: On the centre and left front were the bulk of the Cavalry, with Horse Artillery and Maxims, and spread across the whole plain our Mounted Infantry and the various bodies of irregular horse in which the column is particularly rich. Then the Highland Brigade, accompanied by a strong force of Field Artillery, extended in widely open order straight up the centre of the plain. After these came

## ENGAGEMENT AT WELKOM 151

the 2nd Brigade, with the Sussex Regiment leading, the C.I.V.'s in support, and the Derbyshires and Cameron Highlanders following in reserve ; and with us two batteries of Field Artillery and our two great 5-inch naval guns named "Boers' Delight" and "Bone Shaker," in whose presence we felt much cheered. So the army marched into the V-shaped rising plain, from the flanks of which the wily Boer had hoped to pour a withering fire from secure positions on the flanking hills. But if he really hoped to stop us here, he reckoned without a full appreciation of the numbers and strength of our Artillery, the mobility of our Cavalry, and the ingenuity of our commanders, who, while developing the battle in the front, were fully in touch with the other portion of our forces, advancing eastwards of ourselves, who came up exactly to time on the further flank of the mountains on our right, and made that position entirely untenable by the enemy. Disregarding, therefore, except by artillery fire, the Boers' attentions from that

direction, the Cavalry and leading bodies of infantry gave their special attention to the forces posted on the easier and more practicable slopes on the left of our line of route. And here, while we of the 2nd Brigade lay low in a mealie field covered by a fold of rising ground, the battle raged freely for an hour. We watched the shrapnel bursting, and listened to the continuous purring of the Maxims, the evil tapping of the dreaded pom-poms, and the sharp rattle of independent musketry. We lay down and rested and smoked our pipes and chatted, and the serious part of the business came but little to the surface of our minds. And then as there we lay and scanned the ridge upon our right with our glasses, lo! there were Boers on the ridge busy building trenches and now and again getting up and firing with their rifles at our cavalry scouts on the plain. From us they were just out of range, some 2,000 yards or more, but our Zeiss or Ross prismatic glasses brought them very clearly within view, their faces, hats,

## ENGAGEMENT AT WELKOM 153

and rifles being distinctly visible. "Not quite their proper game," one of us said. "The wily Boer doesn't generally show himself like that if all reports be true." The words were scarcely said when from just in front of us came a boom, and a rattling, whirring whistle passed across our front, and as we looked a great cloud of dust burst almost exactly among the group which had been so incautiously busy on the hill-top. It was a grand shot for a sighter, and this battery of ours scored heavily. Immediately after, boom! boom! and two guns went off like a right and left at partridges. The first shot was right on the very spot, and up got a score or more and fled like ants across the sky-line. But they were too late, for the second landed and burst right among them. We saw them stagger and fall, and some got up again and others did not. Later in the day thirty-seven dead bodies were picked up in that very spot. It was wonderful practice, and the C.I.V. cheered every shot. "Got 'im," said Ortheris, as he rolled the sniping Pathan over at the

154 1000 MILES WITH THE C.I.V.

close of Learoyd's story, and "Got 'em," was the cry of the C.I.V. as that third shell burst among the flying group of Boers. This was sport with a vengeance, better than seeing Aston Villa's left forward score the winning goal, or W. G. hitting three successive boundaries from the best Australian bowling. That was, I believe, the first feeling that all of us had. But our own time had to come, and it came soon. The order for our advance was given, and we extended in open order right across the plain, and found that but for a little desultory firing on the extreme left, the whole of the hills on that side had been cleared. The Cavalry, the Artillery and the Highland Brigade, followed by a charge of the Suffolks, had done the work on that side. Then the C.I.V. were ordered to clear the hill upon the right, and, changing front right, the whole regiment advanced as on a field day to take that hill, while two field batteries and our friends the great naval guns made the positions as uncomfortable as possible for the enemy that was holding them. Whether

## ENGAGEMENT AT WELKOM 155

it was that the artillery fire was too hot, or that the enemy did not like the looks of us, or more probably because the eastern attack on the further side of the kopje was now developing, is uncertain, but one thing is certain, that when the enemy saw us coming up one side they went down the other, and we captured that kopje without a single shot being fired on either side, with the exception of a scattered volley directed at our little stack of bicycles on the road on the left of the advance, which the Boers probably mistook for a Maxim gun, or some other deadly weapon, and drew a bow at a venture at extreme range. One of these shots came within fifty yards of us, so we laid our machines on the ground after that when not engaged in riding or pushing them along.

H Company got to the top first, and were in time to hasten the enemy's retreat across the plain beyond with some long-range volleys, and then we waited and gathered breath again till the other part of the army finished off their respective pieces of work,

156 1000 MILES WITH THE C.I.V.

and the whole Boer force was in full retreat.

Such was the battle as far as we could see it. We were scarcely, it is true, under fire ourselves, and our side lost but few men in all, though the Cavalry suffered at the commencement of the action, and a stray shell or bullet occasionally found its billet among the different bodies of troops engaged. But the winning of a battle, or the importance of its results does not depend on the number of men killed or wounded on the winning side, and the general who wins a fight with the least loss is a cleverer leader than the one who has to sacrifice many lives to gain his end.

The result of the fight was that on the following day we marched unopposed through two positions which could have been rendered impregnable to a direct attack, and most difficult and dangerous however attempted; and we marched into Winburg entirely unopposed with the enemy in full flight before us, leaving the whole town and

## ENGAGEMENT AT WELKOM 157

its stores, goods and property intact in our hands.

THE VELDT, TEN MILES NORTH OF WINBURG,  
*May 8th.*

It is indeed most difficult to attempt to write, much more to give any account or detailed description of the crowded events of the past week ; it is impossible to know when a letter may be completed, or even if it will ever get to post, much less arrive at its destination. As yesterday I was writing a few lines, "tent orderlies" were called (a somewhat sarcastic term now as we have seen no tents for eight days), and it transpired that we were to have our meat served out. It was raw meat, just killed, and had to be cooked. We cyclists possessed a railway sleeper between us and a mess-tin a-piece. After half an hour we were eating an excellent steak! Remembering the French methods we cut our lump of flesh into slices, hammered them thoroughly with large pieces of split sleeper to make them tender, saved the

best of the fat to fry in and made us savoury meat with the help of a bit of onion-top, thrown away by a private in the Camerons who had plucked the fruit in a field the previous day. The process over, orders came to parade at 3.45, and march at 4.30, so writing was over for the day. We made ten miles that night, for we did not start till dusk, and now we are resting ten miles out on the veldt, for what reason we know not. Some say that there is an armistice for four days, and that the enemy are about to surrender; others that we are ahead of our time and must wait for the parallel columns to get level; others again that we have run short of provisions and that we must wait for supplies. The latter is the most probable, for we have had no bread or biscuit for twenty-four hours, and a lump of dough per man is all that is now between us and a sparse and tough meat diet. We cooked our lumps to-day in old bully-beef tins, on a fire made of damp willow branches with infinitely nasty results, but we wanted

## ENGAGEMENT AT WELKOM 159

more, and thought our home-made cakes delicious.

It is these small things that seem to us now of more importance than the big ones through which we have passed. The provisions for the day, the fowl we caught at Isabellafontein and stewed in our tins, the packet of cornflour we bought at a farm, and the tin of sardines that came as it were from heaven, the keeping warm o' night by the help of our spare under-clothing, the rising by starlight, the gathering of a dry scrap of wood for the bivouac fire, the uneasiness as to whether our feet will last through to-morrow's march ; such are the details that overshadow the importance of the progress of the war, the excitement of our first battle, and the greatness of the movement in which we are taking part.



## CHAPTER X

### BATTLE OF ZAND RIVER

KROONSTADT,

*May 13th, 1900.*

LAST night, without firing a shot, without having heard for two long days the now familiar boom of artillery, either far or near, the 21st Brigade, with the C.I.V. as its junior battalion, plodded wearily, silently, and Heavens! how hungrily, into camp at Kroonstadt, that last ditch, that strongly intrenched position, which, as all the world has heard, every Free Stater, supported by the whole unbroken strength of the Transvaal, would die to defend!

It was with no thoughts of triumph, no feelings of elation, no sense of excitement over battles past or anticipation of those to

come that we dragged ourselves along those last weary miles after nightfall through clouds of suffocating moonlit dust. At every halt, as the great convoy, to which that day our fate was to act as rear-guard, was checked at difficult places on the line of route, the men sat down and rested silently. At every advance they rose again and still plodded on, till the march, begun late in the day, appeared to be dragging out to length interminable.

For weeks and weeks we have been marching, for weeks and weeks our rations have been dwindling, we have rested but two whole days since the Brigade was formed at Glen, and before that we of the C.I.V. had completed over a hundred miles' continuous marching from Springfontein. We have fought two battles and been in partial action on five occasions on the road, and now we stand on parade at Kroonstadt 850 strong, and can say, I think, that we are amateurs no longer.

We start again probably to-morrow for

## BATTLE OF ZAND RIVER 163

another long and weary tramp, though our rations are still cut down to two-thirds only and no extras. Seven hard biscuits for two days (sometimes they have to last for three), a piece of raw meat daily and find your own fire to cook it with, and once a week a quarter of a pot of jam per man ; that is all we have had to eat for a month, and that is the maximum which we can expect for another. We have eaten all our private chocolate, we have smoked all our tobacco, and we have used up all our matches. We are forbidden to catch chickens even if they run across our path and are practically ownerless, and we may not enter a house to buy them. Other regiments are not allowed to, only they do. But we are more regular than the regulars ; and infinitely worse off than the irregulars, for they get enough and to spare in the way of fowls, eggs, sheep and vegetables on the line of march.

Even when we arrive at our camp for the night the first order that is issued is that no

man is to leave the ranks under any circumstances ; and when, half an hour later, permission is granted to the men to collect wood to cook their meat withal, we find that all that is dry and good and near has already been cut and collected by the other troops of the brigade, and we must go farther and fare worse. So we have our troubles and we are tired and hungry and a little cross and bored, and we are beginning to hope that the end is coming soon. But we have come through big things, and I think we ought to be proud of ourselves even if it does not occur to us to feel so now ; and I believe the City of London and the country which we came out to serve need not be ashamed of the work which we town-bred amateurs have put in, side by side with the picked, matured and highly trained professionals whose lot we have shared and whose task has been no greater than ours.

It was the battle of the Zand River which enabled us to march unopposed into Kroonstadt, and it was the heavy marching we

## BATTLE OF ZAND RIVER 165

had previously put in that enabled us to win that battle, with but few casualties to the brigade and none at all to the regiment. It was our own brigade, notwithstanding, which bore the brunt of the fight and successfully carried a frontal attack against an entrenched position, defended by a strong force of Boers under orders to hold it or die, and carefully chosen and prepared by them as the strongest natural line of resistance to the advancing British forces between Bloemfontein and Pretoria. We won the battle almost without loss, because, for the second time only in the war (French's great march being the first), the British forces took their enemy entirely by surprise. We arrived in front of the position a day earlier than they expected ; we went straight on that night and captured the bed of the river and held it by our outposts, when they believed we should not attempt the crossing until the following day. We crossed by a subsidiary drift before dawn up to our waists in water, instead of following the main road and trying

166 1000 MILES WITH THE C.I.V.

to force the shallow crossing commanded by their artillery ; and, finally, our own artillery fire was so smart and keen and searching that the trenches and schanzes and folds of ground where the enemy lay in wait for us must have been but comfortless shelters throughout those long hours of fighting. And so, when the last order came to charge, the few brave hearts who stuck to their posts, after their guns had been withdrawn or disabled, their pom-poms destroyed or captured and their comrades gone, waited not for the bayonet, but fled over the skyline and across the open valley beyond, leaving a trail of wounded and dying behind them, as our pitiless guns followed their retreat and poured in shell upon them.

That the result of the fight was due to the quickness of our movements and the cleverness of our generals, and in particular Generals Ian Hamilton and Smith-Dorrien in command of the Winburg column, and General Bruce Hamilton commanding the 21st Brigade, in so completely upsetting the

## BATTLE OF ZAND RIVER 167

well-laid plans of the enemy, was told me by a captured officer of General Lemmer's commando. This commando, 1,200 strong, had been sent forward with five guns from Kroonstadt to hold the position which we captured. He had himself been in command of their advanced posts with orders to hold the bed of the river, and early in the fight was cut off from the main body entrenched on the rocky kopjes beyond and fell into our hands shortly after daybreak. He told me that the Boer generals had been completely deceived by our manœuvres, and that consequently much confusion prevailed in their lines.

Instead, therefore, of a bitter and prolonged battle for the almost impassable river-bed, to capture which we must have lost terribly or waited for the great turning movement on our left, led by Lord Roberts himself, we were able, after six hours' fighting, to carry the whole of the Boer position with much heavier loss to the enemy than to ourselves, and clear the

168 1000 MILES WITH THE C.I.V.

way unopposed straight on to their seat of government. It was bitterly cold in those small hours of May 10th when, at 3.30 a.m., we rose from the ground and collected our kit together. At four we were ready to march. Before we started a brief idea of the duties we had to perform was read to us by Colonel Mackinnon.

We, the 21st Brigade, were ordered to force and hold the river, while General Tucker on our left and General Broadwood on our right, each with a large force of Cavalry and Mounted Infantry, were to endeavour to surround and enclose the enemy on the flanks.

At half-past four, still in the black of moonless night, the infantry brigade moved off and crossed the open plain, marching very rapidly in full sight, had it been day, of the Boer lines on the other side of the river. We reached the lower drift, and were under cover of the river banks held by our outposts the night before, just at daybreak, and as the sun rose we waded through the river

## BATTLE OF ZAND RIVER 169

in bitterly cold water up to our waists, getting our ammunition waggons and water-carts safely down and up the steep banks without drawing the enemy's fire. And so as the sun came up and our artillery on the further bank opened the ball with the two great 5-inch guns on the Boer trenches, the battle was half-won already.

Then suddenly as we filed along through the mimosa scrub by the sandstone bluffs of the northern side of the river-bed to take up our positions for the attack, the enemy awoke to the state of affairs, and their whole force of artillery, great Creusot guns, field guns, pom-poms and maxims, were turned upon us, and the shells began to scream all about us, searching the river and the scrub to check the deployment, and endeavouring to keep down the fire of our own guns, which were now in full work on the southern bank. But the cover was too good, and our luck was still better, for though shell after shell burst around and beside us, and though several of us were hit on equipment and

## 170 1000 MILES WITH THE C.I.V.

accoutrements by flying fragments, not a single man was hurt. The pom-pom was our worst and most scaring enemy. At one place our ammunition waggons had to leave cover to avoid a deep transverse ravine, and the guard and we four cyclists had to go the same route. It was a marked spot, and the spiteful Vickers-Maxim knew it and lost no time. He gave us four discharges of six to eight shells each. We could not see the shells, but we could hear them as they swarmed and shrieked like gigantic mosquitoes, and burst like diabolical squibs about our ears. We could not do anything but go slowly on, still watching and guarding as usual our precious pneumatic tyres against the great mimosa thorns ; and when we reached cover again each man of us looked himself over and was pleased to find that he was still alive. But our revenge was near. At the very next opening in the bush the same unpleasant gun was beginning to repeat the dose when from far away on the southern bank near our old camp of the night before

## BATTLE OF ZAND RIVER 171

came a great dull boom, and over our heads came a rushing, whistling and roaring, and as even we looked a shell from one of the big 5-inchers burst in a great cloud of yellow dust, right in the very spot from which that grisly barking had been coming, and the voice of the pom-pom was heard no more. It was a wonderful shot, or a wonderful bit of luck, and it relieved our minds greatly for the rest of the morning.

After this came a welcome pause in the proceedings, as far as we were concerned, though the artillery fire grew ever heavier, and one was able to grasp the situation more plainly. Roughly it was as follows : On the south side of the river is a broad open plain, at the far side of which we had encamped the night before. The river itself runs east and west between high perpendicular sandstone cliffs, here and there intersected with deep water-worn gullies, leaving sandy beaches in the river-bed, while the northern cliff is broken away at the top and covered with thick mimosa scrub. Along

172 1000 MILES WITH THE C.I.V.

the northern side of the river runs a line of kopjes, forming a sort of amphitheatre, commanding the main ford, and ending in high bluffs on the east and west. We crossed, as I have said, at a smaller ford, two miles down the river to the west, and had now lined the bank of the river up to the main drift, working our way under its cover to the east. On our extreme right were the Camerons, then the Sussex and Derbys, with ourselves on the left. As the attack opened the Camerons worked right round to the right and out of sight of us, scaled the high kopje on the flank of the enemy's force with the loss of but one slightly wounded man. To the Sussex Regiment in the centre the main attack was entrusted, while the Derbyshires extended to their left and ourselves in reserve behind the central attack. So we went on in extended order until the whole force came under heavy infantry fire from the schanzes and trenches in the centre of the opposing amphitheatre. Meanwhile one battery of artillery had safely

## BATTLE OF ZAND RIVER 173

negotiated the drift and was ably assisting the firing line on the right, which was not unduly pushed on, but kept in good cover in a fold of ground in the centre, and two other batteries guarded by D Company of the C.I.V. opened hotly on the position from the plain beyond the river, making most excellent practice on the hill-tops. The whole of the attack at this point was now fully open to our view as we lay under partial cover on the rising ground above the river, waiting for further orders to push on. The enemy's artillery had for a while been silent, but at last from a distant position out of sight came a heavy boom, followed by a second, and two shrapnel, aimed at our artillery across the river, burst high and short on our right rear. Their next two shots were with percussion shells, and they got a bit nearer, tearing up the ground a hundred yards or so from the battery, which was entirely without cover of any sort. Orders evidently were given to shift to a safer position, and the horses were being galloped up to the guns,

when in quick succession three excellently aimed shells fell and burst all among the battery and our comrades who were guarding the guns. One shell appeared to strike right on to the limber of a gun, but it was got away safely, and in two minutes the whole battery had moved out of danger. The second battery had already left, and was by this time well across the river, and opened splendidly on the position opposite to us, while the Sussex, Derbys and ourselves again began to advance, and the Camerons could be seen clearly on the sky-line of the kopje on our right outflanking the enemy's main position. It was the beginning of the end, and after hanging on for a few minutes longer the enemy began to leave their schanzes in twos and threes, and we could clearly see them as they ran for all they were worth over the sky-line on the hill-top. Then there was a flash and glitter as the Sussex men fixed bayonets. The artillery fire came faster and faster, and the whole force advanced, spreading in sparsely dotted

## BATTLE OF ZAND RIVER 175

lines all across the rising ground. The last shots of the enemy's rear-guard ceased, and by midday the battle was ended and the kopje won. The spectacle had been so intensely interesting and exciting that we scarcely noticed the sundry and various bullets that came our way, though they were whistling about our heads and knocking up spurts of dust on the ground here and there all around us. After the pom-poms and the shrapnel they seemed of much less account. So we all marched up the hill, and when we came to the top there was no sign of the enemy but their dead and wounded whom they left lying in the trenches and on the slopes beyond—and we have seen and heard none since.

And so the C.I.V. came through their second battle, and came through entirely unhurt. May our good luck still pursue us till Pretoria is reached! Meantime food and rest is what we think of most, and both are very hard to come by. We are off again to-morrow, and we must march and march

176 1000 MILES WITH THE C.I.V.

again till the next battle comes, and still march on again until the end arrives. So let us march, and march quickly.

*May 14th.*

The other cyclists have just joined us, so we are all together again.

## CHAPTER XI

FROM KROONSTADT TO JOHANNESBURG

RANDFONTEIN CAMP, JOHANNESBURG,

*June 2nd, 1900.*

THERE have been two sufficient reasons for not having been able to write any letters since we left Kroonstadt on May 16th. Firstly, there has been no opportunity of posting them, and secondly, every moment of time since then, with the exception of one day set aside for ablutions at Lindley, has been taken up in marching, cooking, fighting, and sleeping. Since our day off at Kroonstadt the 21st Brigade has marched 200 miles, striking due east at first to Lindley, and arriving there by forced marches just in time to anticipate a strong commando of Boers escaping north before Rundle's force;

178 1000 MILES WITH THE C.I.V.

then, after a short day's rest, due north to Heilbron, just arriving in time to capture a convoy of stores and ammunition from the Free State forces who had established their seat of government there and who fled an hour or two before our arrival. Thence, turning north by west, we crossed the main line to the Transvaal and halted for half a day to allow Lord Roberts's force to overtake us and supply us with a little food, and then again to a minor drift on the Vaal, west of the famous Viljoen's Drift, where the railway crosses, and on due north to within twelve miles of Johannesburg, where we arrived to hear the sound of heavy artillery fire just over the ridge beyond us. Turning next morning westerly again, we marched twenty-three miles, with the C.I.V. as advanced guard to the leading brigade of the force, attacked during the afternoon and captured just at sunset a strongly-fortified and fiercely-defended position on the heights around Florida, the C.I.V. and the Gordon Highlanders respectively leading the 21st

TO JOHANNESBURG 179

and 19th Brigades, and finally marched into this camp of rest and food, tired, worn and footsore, but elated at having done what we have done. For, simple Volunteers though we were when we left London, the City Imperial Volunteers have marched now, without a halt of more than three days, farther than any troops during this campaign, and have ended by charging side by side with a regiment whose name has been most in the mouths of the folks at home during this long war, and driving the enemy before us as effectively as they under an excessively heavy cross-fire of artillery, musketry and machine guns. We are elated now, but for the last month weariness, hunger and homesickness have been the only sensations we have been capable of, unless it be a surly, dogged determination to see the thing through, which has helped our men along on their dreary, footsore tramp, and has kept them in the ranks when sickness and fatigue would otherwise have forced them to fall out in sheer despair.

## 180 1000 MILES WITH THE C.I.V.

It has been want of food that has been the heaviest burden we have had to bear. We were hungry after we left Winburg, we were hungrier still when we reached Kroonstadt, but from Lindley to Johannesburg we have been hungriest of all.

For months we have had no bread, for many days no biscuit, and for the last few days before the battle of Florida Heights we have received no bread rations at all save a pinch or two per man of coarse ground mealie, which will not make dough but can only be boiled into a gritty, tasteless, indigestible porridge. Meat we have had, for oxen and sheep have been commandeered along the line of march, and at the worst, the feebler of the trek oxen which drag our empty waggons and our heavy guns have been sacrificed to supply us with our ration of sinewy muscle and skin. And so the portion of time allotted to cooking has formed a most important item in our daily *régime*. *Réveille* may be at 3 a.m. and the march may end at nightfall, but still

wood must be found (or failing that, dry grass and cow-dung will make a passable fire) and water fetched, though it be but liquid mud, and half a mile away. Then one man per mess must hang about the slaughter-house and buy, if possible, at exorbitant rates, a little liver or heart, and a piece of fat for frying purposes. For, it would seem (though whether it is officially permitted I know not and care less) that the entrails of the beasts are the butcher's perquisites, which he may sell to the highest bidder; and when the meat is too tough to eat the liver duly fried makes a tender meal. Then, with care and skill, even the mealie flour may be made to bind into little cakes by first parboiling, then kneading, and finally frying in thoroughly boiling grease. You may even make a choice rissole thuswise: Take of mealie flour per man two ounces; and of such fat as may be procured the choicest parts. Mince the fat finely with a blunt pocket-knife, taking care to eliminate as far as possible dust,

182 1000 MILES WITH THE C.I.V.

grass, ashes, and other foreign matters. Shred of tough trek ox recently slain such fragments as will come off. Mix the whole in a military mess-tin with muddy water, adding salt if procurable. Boil slowly as long as possible on a cow-dung fire in a trench cut in the top of an ant-hill; then knead into cakes about the size of an egg and fry quickly in absolutely boiling fat. The result is most delicious! This is no stretch of the imagination but the bare simple fact, when you have nothing else to eat. How we have craved for a piece of real bread! How the occasional securing of a pot of ration jam for six men has chased away the gloom of the longest march! How the troops have cheered when the news, though false, of the arrival of the much-expected convoy has been spread through the ranks, in hopes that at least two and a quarter biscuits, a half ration, per man, would be forthcoming next day!

It seems paltry, nay, inexcusable, to write

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or speak of these things when we have been fighting stirring battles and are now in possession of an undestroyed Johannesburg, and of that great gold reef, with all its mines intact, which has been, in fact, one of the great moving causes of the war. It seems a strange coincidence that we, the fighting force evolved by the City of London, should have been the first to scale and capture the heights of the Rand, and thus directly cause the fall of the gold reef town itself, and of the reopening of those mines with whose existence so much of the wealth of the City of London is now involved, and whose destruction would have entailed such loss in the community that equipped us and sent us out to fight.

The tale of the battle of Johannesburg has already been told. The merits and demerits of the C.I.V. in their own particular battle just south of Florida has been fully described and discussed. It will be ancient history by the time this letter reaches home. But still, at this moment, our nerves

are thrilling with the shrill whistle of the bullets as they tore in hundreds through our ranks, spurting up the dust in little flecks all round us, and with the howl of the shells which fell and burst within a few yards of us still ringing in our ears mingled with the horrid shriek of the cursed enfilading pom-poms. There is hardly a man in the regiment who was not within a yard or two of death on that day. But only twelve of us were wounded, while the Gordons we hear lost eighty men. And this is why. In all our long marches and all our field exercises during our stay in this country we have been perpetually instructed in the art of taking cover while attacking a position. We practised what had been preached unto us, while the Gordons charged steadily, boldly and unflinchingly for at least six hundred yards in the face of a withering fire and suffered accordingly. That they were obliged to do so to capture their position as splendidly as they did may possibly be a military fact, but it did not

seem to my humble opinion to be the case, and I personally accompanied their charge for a while, having lost our own battalion for the time while carrying a despatch. The following answer, made by our Brigade Signalling-officer to the General of the 19th Brigade in the course of the battle, is instructive : "Where," said General Smith-Dorrien, "is the C.I.V.? I can't see them." "Sir," replied Lieut. Cohen, "you cannot see the C.I.V. when they take cover."

I now learn that we move on to Pretoria to-morrow. One day's rest and food is all we are allowed. Stores have come in, and rations have been served. We have been permitted to buy such things as Johannesburg can provide—flour, sugar, sweets, chocolate, tinned meat, vermicelli, sago and tapioca ; of these we have great store. But they must all be sorted out, packed and carried.

Above all, far above all, our home mail, the accumulations of weeks, has arrived, and

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we are trying to write and answer some of our letters. One fact I would like to put on record, namely, that of all the corps that make up our infantry battalion, the Inns of Court R.V. alone can show a full muster-roll to-day. Every man of our old regiment, viz., one officer, one staff sergeant, two N.C.O.'s and eighteen men of the cyclist section, and our signaller, are all here and all fit. All were present at the battle of Florida Heights, all were under heavy fire, and all escaped without a scratch. We hope and pray to all go home together.

## CHAPTER XII

### ON TO PRETORIA

GASFONTEIN (TWELVE MILES EAST OF PRETORIA),  
*June 9th, 1900.*

AT last we have another day of rest. A week ago the C.I.V. and our comrades of the 21st Brigade were halting for a brief breathing space outside Johannesburg, weary and worn after their great march and the strenuous fighting of the preceding days, and we were hoping against hope for a substantial rest before proceeding to the last march to Pretoria, which in all our hearts was looked to as the absolute end of our weariness and work—and then home. But as at Winburg, and as at the Vaal River, once more came that fatal message of praise from the Chief, “You have marched finely, you

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have fought well. You have earned rest and food. But—the exigencies of the situation, the welfare of the nation, the conduct of the war, demand further efforts—you march again to-morrow."

Then throughout the night came the killing of oxen, the carrying to camp and serving of half rations for three days, and the division of our own store, purchased (at high prices) in Johannesburg, and on Sunday, June 3rd, we, with the whole of Hamilton's column, the 19th Brigade, the 21st Brigade, the 81st, 82nd, and 75th Field Batteries R.A., the batteries of Pom-poms, the two great 5-inch "cow-guns" (as we call them, owing to their method of traction), preceded by the Cavalry Division under Broadwood, which has accompanied us all the long, long way from Thaba Mountain, and the many and various bodies of Mounted Infantry and Light Horse, including the little band of Loch's Horse which more particularly is attached to our own brigade, with all its ambulance, its

convoy, its mules, horses, bullocks and its waggons, trekked bodily northwards for that last thirty miles to Pretoria, the great impregnable fortress, arsenal and stronghold of the enemy's power. News had already reached us that the wily Kruger, with abundance of gold, had fled north-east to Lydenburg, and we knew that French was well ahead with his famous cavalry, and Lord Roberts himself, with his own column, was already on the way to the same goal ; so we felt that to us once again the duty of carrying out the main flanking movement, either to east or west, would be assigned, seeing that we were a force who could be trusted to cover ground and arrive to time at any given place that might be indicated, and to fight adequately when there. Nor were we mistaken. For after an easy march of fifteen miles and an early halt we struck off next morning due west, with the distant sound of great guns in our ears and the expectation of an arduous march and a weary fight in our minds.

So on we went for a mile or two, crossing a drift and climbing a rounded hill, where we halted and lay down at once in the usual manner. But the halt was longer than usual, and many of us had dropped off to sleep, when down the long line of troops suddenly came the sound of wild cheering, taken up by company after company, as some great good news was passed along; official, evidently, because the cheering was unchecked. We were all on our feet at once with straining ears, and then at last the great wave of cheering broke upon us, and our hats flew in the air, our weariness departed, and laughter and shouting took the place of slumber and dogged surliness as the winged word came hurtling along, "Pretoria evacuated and prisoners released!" Was it true? It must be, for it came officially from General Smith-Dorrien himself to the colonels of the various regiments; and, moreover, was not the convoy that crawled parallel with us on the opposite slope now retracing its course and trekking back east-

wards, and was not the news being taken up by the scattered squadrons of horsemen away on our left, who now began to draw rapidly on to the main body? Then came the word to rise up, and the whole column, wheeling to the right, marched bodily eastward, and, striking the main road, again swung ponderously onward, straight for the city of our hopes.

But before many miles were covered doubt again began to gather. We had heard the sound of heavy guns to the northward early in the morning, but they were desultory and soon ceased. Now again the firing broke out far nearer and heavier than before ; gallopers came hurrying in ; officers looked serious ; our rate of marching increased ; stretchers which had been placed on the ambulance waggons were once more ordered out ; and all indications pointed to a contradiction of the morning's news and the imminence of another battle.

There is no need to disguise our disappointment. We had marched enough and

had fought enough, and there was not one of us but felt that fate would indeed be hard if, after all we had gone through we might have to resign the prize at the last moment and encounter once more the hail of bullets and the shriek and crash of bursting shells, any one of which might leave us a useless, senseless mass upon the barren veldt, just when the very end of all our troubles was clearly in view. Nearer and nearer, and heavier and heavier grew the roar of artillery, until as we crossed a rocky ridge and marched down into a broad, open valley, with a bright rippling stream, fringed with trees, running through it, we saw the shrapnel bursting on the rugged heights beyond, and our own artillery on the further sky-line pouring a heavy fire on some unseen force behind the crest, which was evidently replying actively. From both right and left came further sounds of heavy guns, and on the summit of the hills away to our right was a great convoy halted under fire while the fight continued. Crossing the spruit, we

halted on the plain beyond, while all our batteries, including the pom-poms and the cow-guns, were hurried up the ridge.

Every moment more guns came into action, while the enemy's shells were no longer seen to burst, though the sound of brisk musketry now and again broke out. Then gradually as evening drew on and we still remained with piled arms at our posts in the valley, the firing died away and the welcome news arrived that in fact Pretoria had been evacuated and its famous forts dismantled; but that a force of irreconcilables had made a last despairing attempt to stop the progress of the British force, or at least to do as much damage as possible; and that without calling upon the infantry, Lord Roberts had concentrated upon them from three sides a heavy fire of artillery and rendered their attempt futile.

Next day, the 5th of June, Lord Roberts and the victorious army marched into Pretoria. I do not believe that any man who took part in that triumphal ceremony,

and who marched past the great commander and his magnificent staff massed beside the vacant pedestal in the market square of the conquered Boer capital, can ever or will ever recall a moment of greater elation. Surely there was not one in our regiment of volunteers. Such sensations are entirely indescribable. At least it is impossible now to make any attempt to realise them, for again disappointment has clouded our view. Our work is not over yet. We are again on the track of the enemy, not knowing whether we must fight to-morrow or the next day, or march again for another many days. Later on, when and if we all reach home, we shall know and remember better what then was in our minds. That morning we arose early, before dawn, as is customary, with the hoar frost glistening on our blankets in the starlight, and the bitter cold numbing our hands and making the packing of kit the usual bitter penance ; and, as the day broke, we marched up along the valley and through the passes commanded on all

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sides by the rugged heights that make the situation of Pretoria one of the strongest military positions in the world. Then tramping down the broad high-road, we entered the smiling valley, and after rounding the shoulders of some lower hills, could see the trees and spires of the city in the distance. About ten o'clock the whole column left the road and marched up the stony slopes of a rounded hill, and forming up on the summit, we lay down beside our arms, with the whole broad valley and the city three miles away to the east in full view before us.

And here before our eyes the whole of Lord Roberts's column, with the Chief himself at its head and the Guards Brigade leading, marched along the valley road and on to the town itself to receive the final surrender, while we, whose seats to view the spectacle would have commanded prices incalculable at home, slept quietly in the sunshine. At midday we were roused and marched down again to our camping-ground

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just opposite the historic racecourse, where bully beef was served—unheard of luxury!—and a biscuit per man to eat it with. Then at two o'clock we, the whole 21st Brigade, once more formed up, with the Sussex Regiment leading, then the Derbyshires, the Cameron Highlanders next, and in the rear, as junior battalion, the City Imperial Volunteers.

Marching in fours, with the Cyclist Section and the Signallers at the head of the regiment, the C.I.V. swung along, covering quickly the two miles of red and dirty road that led into the city, passing firstly the racecourse, then some scattered outlying houses and sheds. Then entering the tree-shaded streets of the town itself, we marched right by the famous little house of the old President, with its world-renowned stoep, with the much-pictured lions on either side the entrance. And there were sitting there sundry old Boers, with sad and gloomy faces, and in front were two young British sentries, clean and shaved but war-worn in apparel, with fixed bayonets.

Then up a sloping street with new-built shops on either side, and at the end the great church on the Market Square. Half a mile more, and we swung round to the right and there opposite the great Raad House, in the centre of the square, was a crowded mass of horsemen, smart and clean and bright, but all in dim khaki dress ; and as the pipers ceased piping the massed bands struck up, and thirty paces ahead the stretcher-bearers of the Cameron Highlanders passed beyond the centre of the staff, a little man with a small brown face and a large grey moustache drew his horse a trifle forward from the crowd, and leaning forward acknowledged the "Cyclists', eyes left !" (the command I was privileged to give) with hand and cap and a proud fatherly smile, while a burst of cheering rose from the crowd of the Grand Hotel across the broad square and even from the staff itself. That is all I can say personally of that supreme moment, but I was told by those who saw, that the regiment went by

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splendidly, even in comparison with all the regular forces who marched past that day, as though it had been but two miles instead of five hundred to reach that spot and had had enough and to spare to eat, instead of what had fallen to its lot.

So through the tree-grown town, among the poplars and willows and running water, we marched away, and back to our camp, thinking our work was done and that when we marched again it would be for the sea and home.

Next day came our great disappointment. Early in the morning we knew that more work was before us. We learned that we had a short six-mile march to Irene (name of good omen) down the line that afternoon, but we knew also that there was some trouble ahead which necessitated our moving so hurriedly, and that Heidelberg was our destination — a seventy-mile march. And next day, while all but the cyclists had a rest, came once more the message of praise from Lord Roberts. He knew all we had

gone through. He recognised all we had done. Our column had beaten the record of the world in its march from Bloemfontein to Pretoria, and the City Imperial Volunteers had beaten that again by covering the hundred extra miles from Springfontein before the 21st Brigade was formed at Glen. He realised our value as a fighting force. General Smith-Dorrien had informed him of the way we had carried the heights at Doorn Kop outside Johannesburg, and the skill in attack in open order which so effectually minimised our loss. But there was more to do, and we must be prepared to do it at once! and we must march again to-morrow!

And so yesterday we were off on the tramp once more, and here we are to-day, having struck due east from Irene and hurried here as part, I believe, of a force which is surrounding a Boer army still in being, with its 7,000 men, two "Long Toms," and fifteen field guns.

And here we are awaiting with anxious

## 200 1000 MILES WITH THE C.I.V.

hearts the result of a conference between Lord Roberts and General Botha, who is now in supreme command of the existing Transvaal forces. It is close to this spot that the conference is taking place, and the end may be peace and home or war and marching. God grant that the first result may eventuate!

## CHAPTER XIII

### DIAMOND HILL

ELANDSRIVER STATION, ON THE DELAGOA BAY  
RAILWAY (THIRTY MILES EAST OF PRETORIA),  
*June 14th, 1900.*

WHEN I was writing on Saturday last from Gasfontein it was during a period of considerable suspense, for it had been announced definitely that Lord Roberts had arranged a conference with General Botha, and that final peace was probable.

At any rate, we were hoping, all of us, that our heavy work of marching and fighting had at last reached its close, and that all that were alive and well that day would ere long be happily on the way home. Once again, however, this optimistic view was most rudely contradicted, and alas! our

numbers are now fewer by two, killed in the most desperate fight in which the C.I.V. have been engaged, lasting throughout two days, and we have twenty-one comrades wounded in hospital, some of whom are yet in considerable danger. It was on Sunday night when we received the ominous order to parade before dawn; and then the news filtered through, in the strange way in which such information spreads like lightning through a camp, that the peace conference had proved abortive. The Boers had received orders from their President to fight to the last, and they were holding an immensely strong position in considerable force some way to the east, with all their available artillery. To us, the 21st Brigade, supported by other troops from Pretoria, had been assigned the duty of attacking the enemy and driving him out by a wide flanking movement to his left. So at 5 a.m., just before sunrise, for the days have now grown very short, the brigade marched away again to the north-east, over the hills and through

the valleys, passing in the morning hours along a beautifully wooded ravine among the mountains, which led out into a broad expanse of extensive valleys and high, sloping hills with rugged tops which trend in parallel ranges east and west; the continuation evidently of the long ridges which guard the valley of Pretoria. Here we struck off in an easterly direction down one of two parallel valleys, separated by a long rounded hill and flanked on either side by higher ridges. After a continuous march of over fifteen miles we climbed its leftward slope and halted while one of our brigade batteries, posted just above us, opened a heavy fire at an enemy's position unseen to us, while in turn it received attention from a single heavy gun far down the valley to the south and east, whose shells fell harmless some few hundred yards in front of where we lay. So midday passed, while our Cavalry and Mounted Infantry spread out to our front and right, and having shifted the enemy's outpost and gun away

to the south-east, drew a heavy fire of musketry and artillery from what was plainly his main position on the flanking height of the opposite valley to the northward. So after a grateful rest on the summit of the height, company by company we received the word to rise, and extending to ten paces with fifty yards between the lines, the whole battalion marched in open order down the rock-strewn slope and across the fertile plain beyond, while on our left the Sussex Regiment, in similar formation and slightly in advance of us, covered the valley as far as our line of view extended.

Across the valley rose a steep line of rounded bluffs, at the foot of which flowed a bright little river, a typical Hampshire trout-stream, such as abound in this well-watered district, and beyond and above these arose the sound of sharp musketry as our mounted infantry engaged the enemy on his first true line of defence, a series of rocky eminences half a mile beyond and parallel to the river-flanking bluffs. Beyond

these again tier after tier rose the succession of ridges which formed the great position where, on that day and the next, so many lives were fated to end.

Crossing the river we scaled the steep slopes beyond, and again lay down, just beneath the summit, while our artillery above us opened heavily on the ridges beyond.

Nor was it long without answer, for suddenly from the right front of our widely-extended line came the rush and whistle of a shell, which dropped not fifty yards in front of us and almost into the nearest battery. And so for half an hour gun answered gun, and stray pieces of shrapnel and common shell came whirling over the ridge and dropped among us and beyond us. The enemy's fire was fierce and accurate, but, as far as we could see or learn, quite harmless, and after a while it ceased and our own opportunity had come.

So again extending in our old formation and spreading over the sheltering top of the

dome-like hill where we had taken cover, we advanced across a rising arable plateau, pausing here and there where rocky irregularities of the ground gave good shelter, for about half a mile. And then, from another parallel ridge beyond, the shot began to fall thick and fast among our ranks, and our leading line replied as best they could upon the unseen enemy, while the whole body kept on its steady progress in line after line, without any pause or hurry or change in its regular advance. And so we gained that ridge from which the fire had come, to find, of course, no enemy there but only another steeper ridge across a rounded dip beyond. And so, as night was falling, we drew together our widely-spread battalion in the safe shelter of a crevice in the slope already gained, leaving only our leading companies to maintain a careful fire upon the next stronghold of the foe.

Behind us we could see here and there dotted over the open ground, across which we had come, small groups of two or three

bending carefully over some object extended on the ground, or bearing stiff burdens back slowly and laboriously to the rear. Our stretcher-bearers and our medical staff had work that day and seven in all was the total of our wounded. And then as the quick dark came on, turning back from the position so hardly won, but leaving behind us sufficient force to hold it through the night, we marched again to the top of the cliffs above the river and lay down to sleep. Thus the day closed with the battle still in its initial stages. On our side we had established a firm footing on the first line of the enemy's defences, had gained a camping place where the main body could rest secure from molestation, while our outposts held the ground already won, and had secured a strong line of positions for our artillery with which to re-commence operations on the following morning. On the other side the enemy had still his main lines entirely unshaken, our attempt to surround and envelope him had failed, and the whole of his unbroken forces had retired,

with but moderate loss, to an immensely strong series of positions which would require the greatest efforts on our part to cause him to relinquish. Moreover, as we found afterwards, and as is always the case in these admirably chosen Boer lines of defence, he had behind him a safe and easy line of retreat in the event of our attack being pushed home. Thus the honours of the day were so far fairly equal.

Next morning came again that bitter, numbing, early start by the light of the setting moon now at its full, a start which was made none the more cheering by the knowledge that we were going straight into action with the whole ten hours of daylight before us, any one of which might in all likelihood be the last any one of us personally should see. Marching out in close order, which was reassuring, since thereby we knew that the enemy was not immediately in touch with us, we, the C.I.V., made straight for the ridge from which we had driven the Boers overnight, and there we lay in good cover while

two of our batteries of field artillery, coming up on our left and right, opened a heavy searching fire on the further series of ridges, which lay beyond a deep rounded valley exactly parallel with ours. The night before we had been on the extreme right of the infantry line, but now the Derbys, crossing behind us, were extended away to the east, while the Sussex Regiment continued the line on our left, the Cameron Highlanders being still absent from the brigade as far as we could make out. The artillery fire met with but little response and this in itself was a great relief to us ; as, had the fire been returned as keenly and closely as on the previous day, there is no doubt but that our regiment, being just behind and between the two batteries, must have come in pretty heavily for its share of the shrieking, demoralising shrapnel. So, after an hour or so of suspense, we received orders to advance, and crossing the ridge by half companies in open order, still without molestation, we descended the valley, and up to the shelter of the next line of rugged,

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rocky eminences, which the keenness of our shell fire had already cleared of the enemy, without the infantry being called upon to do more than give its moral support. Here we took up our quarters in a tree-grown, hollow cleft, flanked by two high broken piles of tumbled rocks, and guarded on the front by a precipitous ridge, and so we rested again for two good hours while developments we knew not of were going on in the rear. So secure indeed from danger and observation were we, that orders came to cook and eat our midday meal, which we did with pleasure, for we wanted it badly. Meanwhile from either of the two rugged piles of sheltering rocks to right and left, our two faithful batteries maintained an ear-piercing duet, as they shelled and shelled the great line of heights beyond, and this time not without strenuous reply. For over our heads as we ate and drank or slept in that sunny hollow, alive with singing birds and butterflies—a Purple Emperor alit on a piece of raw meat beside me beneath the trees, while Camber-

well Beauties darted and flickered in their glory in the sunshine all around—whistled, shrieked, and burst the unavailing shells, with which the enemy vainly attempted to quiet our guns or delay our final charge. And every now and again, even as throughout the two whole days of battle, from far away behind us, roared the deep boom of our own 5-inchers, and high overhead sang the mellow bubbling whistle of their great lyddite shells, as they carried home those mighty loads of shattering explosive to the furthest heights and most secure strongholds of the hostile fastness. It was a comforting sound to us, fraught with something restful and confidence-inspiring, as though some unseen power was at our backs cheering us on with the assurance of strong and watchful help.

Then once again, company by company, we cautiously left that nook of security, and as we passed across the ridge saw before us again a rolling grass-grown valley, dotted with the all prevailing ant-heaps, and oppo-

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site a frowning, castellated ridge, crowned with jagged rocks, across which, from unseen positions beyond, a hail of shell and shot began to scour the intervening hollow over which our path must lie. To the left, westward of our advance, lay a richly wooded farmstead, with a white villa-like stoep-surrounded house in the centre—the country house, as we learned later, of General Botha himself, the strong young chief who now commands the stubborn remnant of our foes. Above the farm the long steep ridge was broken by a precipitous ravine, from the higher ground on the left of which was pouring a bitter enfilading fire. To the eastward the ridge itself extended for miles in an unbroken line, thus rendering any immediate attempt to turn the position from that side apparently futile. And from far away in this direction were posted other Boer guns which now and then turned their deadly attention in our direction. Exactly opposite, the line was slightly broken by a rounded hollow, which afforded a practicable route to an

attacking force to gain the summit, without actually indulging in feats of Alpine climbing. Here the efforts of our guns had to some extent cleared the way before us, so that from the immediate front we encountered no directly-aimed musketry fire.

So on went the regiment, line after line, without a pause, till the whole of the intervening valley and the lower slopes of the kopje itself, where the dust was spurting up as in a hailstorm with the carefully directed bullets of a still unseen enemy, was dotted with the regular lines of widely scattered men, who advanced, lay down, rose up and advanced again, with splendid precision, quite heedless of the singing in the air above and the spouting of the dust around. And every now and again a man would lie down before his time, or fail to rise when the word was passed along. And then the cry was "Stretcher-bearers," and the rest passed on. And then, from far away upon our right beyond where the gallant Derbyshires were pouring up side by side with us, came that ominous deadly

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knocking, now but too familiar, of the ever-present Vickers-Maxim; and hurtling between the open lines of our brother battalion burst the series of 1-lb. shells, enfilading completely their advance but stopping it not for an instant. Then a pause. Then again five, six, seven, and the earth hurtled up in regular lines a hundred yards nearer our own ranks. And again and again each time closer and closer, till we felt that the next series would be clean among us. But by that time our leading company had gained the top of the ridge, now clear of the enemy, and were firing heavily at the last great line of positions beyond, and our lively foe was off again for other very urgent work. And now the most curious and trying time of the fight had arrived. The castellated front of the long rocky cliff which had faced us was clear of the enemy, and beyond it lay a gently rising grassy slope, open and without cover for some 800 yards; and then rose sheer and rugged the final summit-ridge of all, the ultimate defensive position of our stubborn

enemy. And from this, as our leading lines endeavoured to advance from the shelter of the rocks which we had gained, there poured a concentrated hail of musketry and machine-gun fire, rendering all attempt at a final charge across the open absolutely impracticable.

Moreover, from both left and right the Boer guns maintained an irregular but most accurate cross-fire directed at the top of the hollow, up which our advance had been made, and below which the bulk of our regiment now lay motionless in their outspread ranks. And so for a good hour or more we sheltered each behind his rock or stone, while the whole air whistled and whirled with the bullets, which from the unseen ridge beyond poured over the edge of the hollow and fell mostly in flights and droves in the valley beyond, though many dropped among us. It was easy to distinguish the soft whirr of the long-range Mauser, the angry hum of the ricochet off the rocks, the burring rattle of the hollow-nosed expansive bullet of which

not a few flew by, or the more steady-going and business-like whistle of the Martini-Henry. And then came the shells, shrapnel and common shell, whirling across the rocks in a slanting course from right or left, some bursting overhead and pouring their contents on us in a rushing whisk, some just skimming over our backs as we lay prone and bursting between our ranks, throwing ugly-looking pieces of iron all around, many of which were gathered and kept by those nearest whom they dropped. It was my own bad luck, with a few of my section of cyclists, to have reached, after crossing the valley, the spot by which the majority of these shells alighted; and so, after marking with some anxiety the course of two or three which may have left a few feet interval between them and our backs as they drove across the slope, we deemed that a further advance toward the summit was advisable. So lifting our heavy-laden machines and stumbling upward over the boulders and up the precipitous incline, we

crossed the most dangerous zone where the Mauser bullet whistled thickest, and gained in safety the high rocks on the left summit of the sloping hollow—a bicycle is not an unmixed blessing at such times. From this more sheltered spot it was possible to look back over the line of our advance and see what things were happening in the rear. In the first place, we rejoiced to see more and more troops pouring up to our support, the Guards Brigade itself as we learned later. Secondly, and still more encouraging, was the sight of our two unmatched field batteries, and especially the 82nd, whose marvellous shooting had helped us out of so many tight places, advancing from their last position and coming across to assist us on the left. Then we were not displeased to see that many of the enemy's shells, which flew too high for practical purposes, were bursting among the buildings and gardens of Botha's own country residence; though the sight would have been less consoling had we known that we should camp that night upon that very spot. And

so the time went on, and many pipes were smoked, and not a few of us were struck by the dropping bullets or bursting shells, till the "stretcher-bearers'" work grew heavy, and the westering sun gave warning that but half an hour of daylight remained for us to complete our task or leave it for another day. It was a critical moment, more critical than any of us could realise ; but our General, Ian Hamilton, hitherto unbrokenly successful in all his undertakings, was not one to relinquish a job like this without some big attempt to bring it to a successful issue. The means he took was one which I believe is totally unparalleled in the history of modern war, and practically in contravention to the accepted rules of battle. He brought up the 82nd Battery to the summit of the ridge in the face of armed and unbroken rifle fire at less than 1,000 yards, and got the guns successfully to work, with all their marvellous rapidity and skill, right on to the enemy's strongest trenches and schanzes. The Guards, who had been hitherto lying in the valley

below, climbed up into the firing line away beyond the Derbys on our right. The Derbys themselves advanced with them, drawing in some stragglers from the left, while we ourselves were already in position. And then from all along the line with artillery, musketry and every available machine gun we poured upon the enemy for the best half-hour of daylight the hottest fire that possibly could be maintained. And then the sun sank, the firing died away, the last shell burst across the black ridge beyond, and in the darkness we left the vantage ground we had won, and camped sadly and cheerlessly among the trees around the farmstead of our enemy's commander.

But that last half-hour had done its work. That battery still remained in its position. Our outposts still held the heights, and ere daylight we should all be back again and resume the last day's work. And so under cover of darkness the enemy deserted his position, and the fight which seemed half lost was wholly won, with the result that the

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whole of the enemy's forces were completely cleared away from the neighbourhood of Pretoria—and the work which had been consigned to the 21st Brigade had once again been carried out to the very letter.

## CHAPTER XIV

### A CYCLIST'S DESPATCH RIDE

HEIDELBERG,

*June 23rd, 1900.*

"CIVIS LONDON" is the official telegraphic address of the C.I.V., but the title of a play which was one of the last in which Mr. J. L. Toole appeared in his own little theatre near Charing Cross would perhaps supply a more appropriate one—"Walker London" would fit the regiment most adequately. A glance at the map will mark Heidelberg some seventy-five miles south of Pretoria. Our camp at Elands River, where we stayed one day after the great battle at Schwartz Kop or Botha's Farm, is thirty miles from Pretoria; so since that two days of strenuous fight we have

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covered well over another hundred miles. The conditions have been no better than on our march up-country, and the circumstances similar. The only change we have experienced was a day of drenching, pouring rain, and bitter cold, which two days ago played havoc with our weaker vessels and seriously diminished the numbers of the battalion. We now number little more than 450 fighting men, but those we have are fit and well, and fortunately so, for, if report says true, we have still many weary miles of marching, and possibly many heavy days of fighting, before us ere our work is done. One day's march is much like another, one day's fight in this country differs but little from the last; but those of us who are cyclists have from time to time the opportunity of encountering experiences which are sometimes exciting, sometimes wearisome, but generally out of the routine of campaigning in the ranks. To say just what our function is when severely attached to a battalion as we are, and not employed on

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what we consider our legitimate work of despatch riding, would be difficult, for the uses to which we are put are so many and various. On the march, two cyclists will habitually accompany the commandant as his orderlies, and do their best to carry his messages, whether climbing a kopje, crossing the roughest veldt, or travelling easily on the fine roads with which this country is intersected. Two will be with the adjutant in similar capacity, and the remainder will push their bicycles, or ride a tortoise race behind the regiment in among the water-cart mules and the wheels of the machine guns. On other days, when the battalion is leading, the whole section will ride ahead and keep touch with the Cavalry screen, occasionally further justifying their existence by discovering available roads for the transport, and going back perhaps five or six miles to direct the same.

Then at times we run ahead to find the camping ground for the regiment, at others we stay behind to attend to the sick who are

being transferred to hospital. Then, on the field of battle we usually are split up with the different portions of the regiment; and when a kopje is charged and taken, however steep or rocky, there will usually be a cyclist or two on the top with the leading rank, while others will be scattered over the field conveying messages by Kaffir tracks or across the veldt where it is at all rideable, or conveying the cycle itself over the rocks when riding or even pushing is out of the question. But it is when the camp lies within a radius of thirty miles or so from a large town, such as Johannesburg or Pretoria, Bloemfontein or Kroonstadt, that our busiest time arrives. Mails from the regiment, telegrams from the commandant, despatches from the brigade or divisional headquarters, returns of killed and wounded from the battlefield, have to be carried into the town; while money for the payment of the troops, stores and groceries for the officers, ourselves, and sometimes our company, have to be carried out, and it is on

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the back of the cyclist and the interior of his capacious Alpine rück-sack that they are borne.

As an illustration of one of the more interesting and exciting errands of this nature, a journey made by three of us from Elands River to Pretoria in charge of the battalion mails and the brigade despatches, with full lists of killed and wounded at the fight at Schwartz Kop, is fairly representative.

It was about 2.30 p.m. when we were ready to start—that is to say, when the powers that be at headquarters were ready with the despatches. We had, therefore, less than two and a half hours of daylight before us. The map made the distance by the nearest route, *i.e.*, along the railway, about twenty-five miles. The official mileage, arrived at how I know not, said “about eighteen.” Actually it was well over thirty. This is about the true proportion of official distances from point to point as compared to the actual facts in this country.

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We decided to follow the line of railway, but were warned to be careful, as nobody knew whether the line was clear of the enemy or not, for no news had been able to reach us along that route, and it was known that the enemy had been holding the line up to two days before. So off we set, making the best time possible when there was a little track by the side of the metals, or riding between them when the sleepers were covered and there were not too many big stones. Now and again for a mile we had to dismount and push, and now and again where the railway curved broadly we made a short cut by road across an intervening valley. The country for seven or eight miles was absolutely deserted, save for sundry Kaffir servants who were holding high carnival in their masters' gardens. These we interrogated from time to time in our best Dutch, and gradually learned that it was only the evening before that the main body of the enemy had left the line, proceeding northward across the hills. At last, some ten miles

out, at about a quarter to four, we saw that ahead of us to the westward the hills that flanked the line drew together into two great precipitous headlands, between which the line ran in what seemed to be a narrow, rugged gorge. And in the centre of this gorge, where the westering sun was pouring through, there rose a heavy cloud of dust. Now in these parts, when on the look-out for friend or enemy, a cloud of dust is the surest sign of a body of men on the move, and the nature of that cloud will tell you at a distance whether that body is foot or horse, artillery or convoy. Our field-glasses were therefore at once at work, and the cloud resolved itself into a small company of horsemen, about twelve in all, accompanied by a Cape cart. They were not in uniform, they wore dark clothes and slouch hats, and they were armed! Undoubtedly Boers! We were then on an open road, descending a hill towards the gorge, and so we turned and went with great rapidity up that hill again and over the sky-line, trusting not to

have been seen. When well under cover we again prospected. The party had stopped and were sending out one or two men in advance. They had evidently seen us and were taking the natural steps to capture us if unsupported, or avoid capture themselves if we were in advance of a larger party.

So the momentous question arose, what were we to do? To go on then was madness, to return to camp was ignominious, to attempt to go round was impossible owing to the nature of the ground and the nearness of the night. So we determined to adopt a fourth alternative, namely, to separate and hide till nightfall, and after dark endeavour to creep unobserved through whatever force might be holding that gorge. We knew the British lines must be near, for the ravine could not be more than fifteen miles from Pretoria, allowing the fullest margin for the official minimising of space, and we thought it quite possible that the party we had seen was the last of the Boers leaving the positions they

had hitherto held. So covering as best we could our tracks along the railway line, we sought the most convenient hiding-places, where it was least likely that a mounted man would find us. Personally I discovered a most eligible lair in a narrow culvert flanked by two deep, rocky cuttings, made on each side of the line for carrying off the waters of the torrential rainy season. And here I lay quiet, and ate the portion of boiled ox-tongue and fried chupatty which I had prepared for the journey. From time to time I crept out and looked round, but saw no sign of the enemy, and heard nothing but the quaint cries of the Kaffirs calling in their cows or horses in the evening. At last, just before the sun went down, I noted a cloud of dust crossing the hills to the northwards, and hoped most eagerly that it was the visible sign of the Boers clearing out in that direction instead of proceeding eastward along the railway. And then, as the sun went down in a blaze of glory behind the sheer gap in the hills to the west, and the chill of night

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came on as suddenly as the darkness, I emerged from the sheltering culvert and, keeping in the ditch by the line, walked as quietly as it is possible to wheel a clanking machine whose cranks will catch and rattle on every projecting rock. About two hundred yards further on I heard a low whistle from a culvert similar to mine, and a hoarse whisper came forth, "Lie down, for God's sake." I lay down, and then my friend Somers crept out and told me that but ten minutes before two armed Boers had ridden by within a hundred yards, evidently looking about anxiously for somebody or something. So we thought that another quarter of an hour's rest would be advisable before proceeding; more would be unadvisable, as in less than two hours the full moon would be high and our task all the harder. In a quarter of an hour the darkness was absolute, save for the glimmer of the stars, and we stepped out along the line, making as little noise as possible, and stopping to listen anxiously at intervals for any sound far or

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near. As we neared the ravine the moon began to rise, but luckily, as we thought, a rippling river ran along the line and drowned the sounds which, with all our care, we could not help making as we stumbled into ditches or hit our cranks against the rocks and stones.

Entering the mouth of the gorge, lights here and there on the hillside and along the line warned us that we were getting within the lines of some force now occupying the pass, and matters got more interesting than ever. The rising moon now shone brightly on the summits of the sheer precipices which flanked the narrow valley, and below us in a deep gully rushed a rapid river. We had already cleared unobserved the outer posts of the occupying force, and there was therefore little likelihood of getting safely back again, and any attempt at a *détour* was quite impossible. Our only chance, if it was actually the enemy among whom we were working our way, seemed to be to leave our machines, crawl down into the river-bed which was still hid in absolute blackness, and

232 1000 MILES WITH THE C.I.V.

trust to the rushing water and the darkness to help us through. By this time we were creeping along a ditch in a deep cutting of the line when just ahead of us appeared a light. So climbing the bank of the cutting I cautiously lay down on the top and looked and listened. Within fifty yards of us was a cluster of lights and men moving among them, while still nearer was a glow from the open door of a Kaffir hut, and voices proceeding therefrom. I listened still more keenly. I could hear no words, but one voice seemed to me to have a decidedly English intonation. At last, after what seemed an age of suspense, two figures came out of the hut, and I distinctly heard these words uttered in the shrill, cracky voice of the native Kaffir, "Me got no hen, him all took." They were the sweetest words I had heard for many a day, for I knew at once, firstly, that he was speaking to an Englishman, secondly, that that Englishman was a British horseman, probably belonging to some body of Mounted Infantry or Light

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Horse, whose powers of foraging are proverbial, and thirdly, that whoever it was had but just arrived. And so it was. For hastily leaving the cutting I walked across the few intervening yards and stumbled into the arms of a stalwart trooper of the 7th Imperial Yeomanry, who told me that his regiment had taken up their posts at the head of the ravine just after sunset, while the last of the Boers had left, so said the Kaffirs, less than an hour before.

The enemy had been holding the pass in force the previous evening, and had made matters very warm for the troops who had tried to force the passage, and so support us in our battle by a flanking movement on the left. They had with them a Long Tom on a truck which they shifted up and down the line as our Naval guns tried to find its range, while other guns held the flanking heights, and so rendered the position absolutely impregnable. It was only the success of our attack on the hills south of the line and far away to the east that had

succeeded in clearing this most important position of a most determined foe. And so in a moment the explanation of our own manœuvres, and the lack of support which we had always been expecting from Pretoria on our left was amply clear. After explaining our errand to the officer in charge of the picket, and informing him with some sense of pride how we had got clear through all his sentries and right into his main body without a challenge, we pushed on again down a most rough and rugged path, and after a mile of stumbling and pushing through sand and rock, were at last challenged by a sentry and taken by him to the headquarters of Colonel Henry, commanding the 7th Imperial Yeomanry, the only regiment of that famous body that has had the luck to get actually to the front so far. We were treated with great kindness by all we met, and as in one of the many stumbles and falls I had had the ill-luck to considerably damage the heel of my right foot, we accepted the hospitality of the sergeants' mess, shared

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their supper—a good one, for they were on ample rations—and rolling up in the single blanket we had with us, tried to fancy we were nice and warm. Anyway we were sleepy, and slept fairly well till dawn. Then finding a clear road before us, we slipped easily along the remaining fifteen miles to Pretoria, and delivered our despatches to Lord Roberts himself, just as the ubiquitous and estimable biograph was holding a *seance* over the person of the Commander-in-Chief and his Staff. And thus, should the film survive, a memento of our adventurous ride will appear in due course on the famous screen of the Palace Theatre long before any of us see England again.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This scene was shown at the Palace Theatre for some nights.



## CHAPTER XV

### BACK TO HEILBRON

JOHANNESBURG HOSPITAL,

*August 1st, 1900.*

TWO months ago the City Imperial Volunteers passed through their first great ordeal of fire, and finally proved to the world, when, side by side with the famous Gordons, they stormed the steepest kopjes of the Rand, that the Volunteer Force of England was pure fighting metal to the core, and no mere electroplated imitation of the real article, for use on field-days and garden parties only. Two months ago the battle of Doornkop and the capture of the Florida Heights placed Johannesburg in the hands of Lord Roberts and his

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victorious army, and opened the way clear to our triumphal entry into Pretoria.

Yes, and two months ago the one absorbing topic of thought and discussion in the regiment individually and collectively was "Home again." There was not one of us but believed that the war was practically over when Pretoria fell and the Government of the South African Republic was broken up thereby, that our work as soldiers was now at an end, and that, whoever might stay to clear up the pieces, we amateurs at least should be no longer required.

But we reckoned without the stalwart and stubborn Botha, we reckoned without the wily and evasive De Wet, and, above all, we reckoned without the hard-won reputation of "Hamilton's Force," that useful, compact, mobile and self-contained army, with its well-trained transport, with its two peerless batteries of Field Artillery, its bonny brace of most efficient long-range 5-inch "cow-guns," and its up-to-date

bevy of nerve-shattering Pom-poms, with its brigade of dashing Cavalry and its clouds of serviceable Mounted Infantry and Light Horse ; with its thoroughly weeded, tried, and toughened battalions of Infantry, who had shown the world that they could beat all records in long-distance marching, could support that marching on the meagrest apologies for diet, and, when fighting came their way, could go straight for the enemy and drive him in confusion from the strongest and most carefully selected positions that his well-practised wit could devise ; and last, but assuredly not least, with its trusty and trusted chief, General Ian Hamilton, the one unboomed leader of them all, who during this campaign of shattered reputations and sudden outbreaks of swiftly-gained hero-worship, has steadily, solidly, and brilliantly carried through each task that has been assigned to him, without a check, without a disaster, without a blunder without advertisement. But "Bobs" knew !

And so, while our comrades of the 19th

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Brigade under General Smith-Dorrien (who, as commander of the infantry of "Hamilton's Force," shares with Ian Hamilton himself in the success of our great Anabasis) were at last separated from us and assigned the more restful task of guarding communications, we, the four battalions of infantry of the 21st, under our own revered leader, the other Hamilton, to wit Bruce "of that ilk," with all the other arms of the service, Mounted Infantry, Cavalry, Artillery and the whole impedimenta of our compact and complete little army, once more were called upon to march and fight and march again. First to the east and then back to Pretoria, then southwards across the Vaal again, without pause or rest we marched; until at last at Heilbron, in the New Orange River Colony, the town through which we had marched in state a month before, after covering on foot over 700 miles of veldt and kopje, the C.I.V. found partial rest, modified refreshment, and unqualified new clothes!

For indeed it was a regiment of the

ragged and tattered and torn that escorted the convoy committed to its charge from the newly-occupied Frankfort to that would-be rebel city, the centre of the most restless and disaffected district of the yet unpacified territory. Some few lucky ones had, it is true, secured at Pretoria weird white mole-skin reach-me-downs, "cut saucy over the trotters," while others rejoiced in shapeless continuations of grey or blue shoddy cloth. Some had replaced the remnants of their serge khaki tunics with nondescript garments of any sort of neutral tint. But the bulk were barer than Highlanders as to the knee, and more ragged than the veriest street arab in other "parts exposed to wear," as the famous regimental song of the "Devil's Own" politely hath it. Our distinctive slouch hats of grey felt alone remained intact, and when we pinned them up at the side for ceremonial purposes, we straightened ourselves out once more and felt quite smart and soldierlike notwithstanding deficiencies below.

Those hats have proved the one unqualified success of our equipment. By them when in camp in close order, or in column of route, the regiment may be known at a glance—a boon to the cyclist or the mounted orderly with urgent messages to deliver. But when extended on the field of battle, and still more when lying down under fire, they take the form of stones or rough places, or tufts of withered grass, and far more effectually admit of concealment and cover than the ever-conspicuous dome of the regulation helmet. Moreover, in them one can aim and shoot without their tilting over the eyes or falling back over the nape of the neck, as your helmet invariably does. If it might be allowed to an old volunteer of twelve years' efficient service as private and N.C.O. to venture a suggestion, it would surely seem to me that for all volunteer battalions at home, saving perhaps those which form integral parts of their territorial regiments, a headgear of this

description duly modified to suit requirements of taste, smartness and conformity, might prove the ideal covering that has been sought so long and hitherto evaded discovery. But in any case "where fighting's to be done" avoid feather plumes or nodding aigrettes, whatever may look tasty in times of peace.

The southward march of the C.I.V. after the big fight at Diamond Hill needs but little description. It was in many respects a replica of our northward progress, saving that at first we did not go quite so fast, we had more frequent days of rest, and, above all, were better fed. From Elands River station, thirty good miles by railway to Pretoria and a good deal more by road, two days of fairly heavy walking found the regiment back again in camp in the suburbs of the capital, this time at "Arcadia," the new residential quarter east of the city, where smart and pretty red-brick villas are springing up amid green gardens and flowery plots of ground, just as it might be Surbiton

or Frognal. Two days were spent here, and the city streets were thronged with war-worn veterans in search of square meals, which most of us were successful in obtaining at not too exorbitant rate. Oh, the luxury of it ! A chair, a tablecloth, a change of plates, knives, forks and spoons, a glass to drink from, though it be but lime-juice and soda, and a waiter to serve the viands withal. And then back to camp, laden with hard-found loaves of real bread, and for the lucky ones an occasional tin of Harmen's most excellent canned Dutch butter, fresh, sweet and toothsome, at three shillings the pound, and cheap at that.

But why, when individuals could find, after careful search, ample bread and to spare for several days' consumption, must the commissariat department of the C.I.V. confine its doles to half rations of biscuit, eked out with a small portion of indifferent wheat-meal flour ? There were bakeries in full blast in Pretoria, where the more pushing among the regimental caterers were contract-

ing for full rations of excellent bread, leaving sufficient over for individual enterprise to unearth. But alas! a blight of *laissez faire* in this department seems to have settled on Ours throughout the whole campaign, and our lot in the provision line has been far from a happy one. Moreover, the pay of a soldier, if not supplemented from the private exchequer, goes but a short way to supplement commissariat deficiencies in this land of high prices and short supplies. From Arcadia it was a twelve miles' stretch across the southern range of Pretoria's rampart hills to our old camping ground at Irene station, that sweetly-wooded nook with its bright, babbling stream and its romantic name, so ill in accord with the realities of war which have for months encircled it with a great girdle of British bivouacs. Thence, striking south-eastwards at a narrow angle from the railway line, two more marching days brought us to Springs, the Newcastle of the Rand, the prospect of whose coal-mines in the near future seems wonderfully bright.

And here a great misfortune befell our weary force, for as we scaled the long hill that leads from the lower northern plateau to the high ground of the great Rand ridge, a bitter, biting wind arose, driving before it huge black clouds. These burst as the storm gust caught us, and poured forth for three solid hours a pitiless downpour of marrow-chilling rain, drenching each weary soldier to the bone, and washing the very heart out of those who, though sick and sorry, had hitherto struggled on with the regiment in hopes of better times to come. And more, the soaking wet penetrating through the parched leather of our boots hardened each fold and ruck, till the tender skin of the footsore peeled and tore, and another batch of disabled was added to the roll of those who could go no further.

Next morning at *réveillé* the muster of the sick passed all record, and, though the medical scrutiny was more than usually searching, it was a sadly numerous detachment that the brigade was forced to leave

behind it to take train for Johannesburg, and swell the already formidable details of sick and wounded that were congregating there.

At Springs once more we came within measurable distance of an enemy "in being." We learned from the Canadian troops who were quartered there as garrison that their outposts were continually in touch with small bodies of the Boers, and that long-range sniping was prevalent. We were now within a long day's march of Heidelberg, the easternmost town of the Rand, situated on the line of railway to Natal, one of the oldest cities of the Transvaal, recently galvanised into mushroom modernity by the neighbourhood of the rich Nigel reef, and at present occupied by a commando of the enemy some 1,500 strong, but growing rapidly in numbers from day to day. It was therefore especially urgent that this force should be promptly captured, defeated, or dispersed, in order both to clear the line to Natal, which Buller by his successful forcing

of the Drakensberg passes had recently opened as far as Standerton, and to remove a dangerous rallying point for the broken Boer commandoes of the Natal frontier from the immediate vicinity of Johannesburg and our northern line of communications.

This was, then, the first object of our hurried mission to the south. And so it was that, without waiting to hang ourselves out to dry after the drenching day and dripping night, we set forth next morning on another sixteen miles of veldt-covering, which brought the column at its close within Long Tom range of the frowning ridge of lofty hills by which Heidelberg is guarded on every side. That evening our frugal meal was diversified by the blatant accompaniment of our great pet "cow-guns," which livened matters up considerably by dumping lyddite at ten minutes' interval all along the summits of the opposing mountains—a gentle hint to the enemy, who might or might not be there, that we were coming along and meant business. Next morning

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we marched unopposed into the town. It had been carefully evacuated by that commando at early dawn.

So we took up our quarters, in lovely drying weather, in a field hard by the railway station, and as we settled down in comparative comfort, with a pleasant sense of "another job completed," the Mounted Infantry, the Pom-poms and a battery of artillery, did all that was required to the hostile rearguard who had posted themselves on the hills beyond the town to command both the railway to the eastward and our prospective southern route across country to the Vaal River. This rearguard also "bethought itself and went" quite early in the afternoon. So we rested in peace for three whole days, supplying ourselves with material for our bivouac fires from the football fields close by. The Rugby goal posts and Association uprights form a good, bright, and lasting fuel, while pavilion wood-work kindles swiftly and burns with a rapid but uneconomical heat. A judicious blend,

## 250 1000 MILES WITH THE C.I.V.

therefore, constitutes the ideal fire. During these three days, while the troops were luxuriating in inactivity, serious preparations for a further important movement went steadily on. A continuous flow of fully laden ox waggons poured in by the Johannesburg road. Another column of troops under General Hunter joined hands with us, and was promptly dispersed again, a portion taking up its quarters as garrison to the town, while two battalions were hurried northwards, in view of events of which to us but vague rumours filtered through. Our little band of cyclists was especially in demand, and daily two or more of us covered the thirty-two miles of excellent road to Johannesburg, burdened with mails, despatches and messages of all kinds to and from both the battalion and the general headquarters.

At last when all was ready, on the 27th of June, the whole force started again on its final tramp to the southward, taking with it a mighty train of transport, laden with ample

supplies for fourteen days, and extending when on the march over full five miles of road. It was hard going for both man and beast, especially beast, through the deep, sandy tract which borders the Vaal River on either bank, and it required three heavy days of dreary trudging before the drift at Villiers-dorp was reached, and the Transvaal once more left behind us. Two days' march from the Vaal brought the column to its second main objective, namely, the occupation of Frankfort, a typical Free State town hitherto unentered by British troops. It was now not only a hotbed of disaffection, but also a salient point on the direct line of communication between the yet unbroken forces of the enemy, under De Wet and Prinsloo, in the east of the Orange River Colony, and their main army under Botha in the Transvaal. Here it was at last that the connection of the C.I.V. with the 21st Brigade, begun so long ago at Glen, was for the first time severed. Leaving behind us here our brother battalions, whose hardships and trials we had shared and

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in whose triumphs we had participated, through two long months of hard marching, stiff fighting and short feeding, and across 600 miles of sunburnt veldt and rock-strewn kopje, our now lonely regiment shaped its course to the westward in charge of an important convoy. Then after covering by two forced marches the forty long miles that lay between Frankfort and Heilbron, it at last was rewarded by the long-deferred repose which it so sadly needed.

It may be noted, by the way, that this final hurried rush of twenty miles a day, which came as a last straw to so many of our men, and cost the convoy at least thirty or forty valuable beasts of transport, affords another of the many instances during this campaign of the extraordinary and perpetual official underestimation of distance. On the morning of the last day's trek to Heilbron it had been definitely stated that there were but fourteen easy miles to cover. This was no mere camp rumour, but the actual official estimate of the mileage that lay before us.

The true distance turned out to be, as I have said, fully twenty miles! Now the question how such discrepancies can arise may be an entertaining problem to study; but in any case they do not conduce to the comfort of the men, or the marching efficiency of the column. Moreover, this chronic belittling of distances ahead had been wont to break out with recurring frequency throughout the whole of our journey up from Glen to Pretoria and back again. The only theory that would possibly appear to account for the phenomenon seems to be that the official mind, in calculating distances from point to point, procures the most inaccurate map available, and then proceeds to measure, by marking off on a straight-edge scale the bee-line space between those points, with an absolute disregard for bends or curves or contours on the line of march. This may be putting the case too strongly; but the united evidence of six or more thoroughly tested cyclometers, checked by the average marching speed of a column that has covered without a break many hundreds

of miles of country, forms a body of testimony as to actual distances covered from day to day that is hard to overcome, especially when that evidence agrees in the aggregate over many days of marching with the official scale of the most recently published maps of the locality that could be procured in London before we started for the front.

And now as I write the curtain is once more ringing up on another, and, perhaps, the last act of drama of the C.I.V. campaign. During the last three quiet weeks of garrison work at Heilbron, the regiment divided up into company units, had settled down to its new duties in fortified outpost stations ready for any possible attack from the swiftly moving bands with which the much-pressed but hitherto unvanquished Christian de Wet has been carrying on his plucky campaign of guerilla warfare along our main line of communications. And then again the unexpected happened. Sudden orders were received to evacuate the position forthwith, and the whole battalion has been turned northward once

more, by train to Johannesburg and thence out west to Krügersdorp, where rumour hath it that a great British force is concentrating.

What the meaning of this move may be, or what the future has in store, is still “wrapt in mystery.” Meantime I, who write these lines, after passing scatheless through the whole great march, till the second time our regiment crossed the Vaal, am now luxuriating in the early stages of convalescence from the mildest of attacks of the dread enteric fiend, more than ever thankful that the opportunity for inoculation on board the *Ariosto* was not let slip, and ineffably grateful for the good fortune that brought me, in the capacity of despatch rider from the marching column to the very doors of the most perfectly appointed hospital in South Africa—a hospital where the kindness, care and attention received by each and all, the perfect nursing, the immaculate cleanliness, the skilful medical attendance and the dainty diet, present a brilliant contrast to the most adequate treatment that any military hospital can possibly provide; and

256 1000 MILES WITH THE C.I.V.

that without casting the slightest slur on those much maligned but eminently well-meaning establishments. Among all the institutions that in this or any other country in the world are doing good works to-day, and doing them well, the Johannesburg Hospital, in these troublous times of strain and stress, must surely hold a foremost place, and it will be with a life-long feeling of gratitude that I, as I trust will be my lot in the near future, will leave its hospitable walls.

## CHAPTER XVI

### FINAL CONCENTRATION AT PRETORIA

BLOEMFONTEIN,

*September 16th, 1900.*

IT is strange indeed to look backward from the haven of this peaceful city over the stormy panorama of the past six months of campaigning.

Here in Bloemfontein the decencies of civilisation, a good house, a comfortable bed, clean clothes, and ample food have driven into dreamland the rags, the dirt, the weariness, and the hunger of life on commando. Legal and administrative work in Government buildings or Court of Justice with the club, the cricket-field, the social tea party, or the Colonial evening gathering as relaxations (for Bloemfontein even now is not without its

society, and boasts a commendable array of local beauty and fashion) have exiled to the misty fields of memory the daily round of endless trekking and primitive cooking varied only by occasional foregatherings with our friend the enemy, with rifles and cannon to supply the music. And the step from one to the other has been over the bridge of sickness and past the dim crossroads that lead to the portals of death.

Here upon the stoep of a commandeered house on Monument Hill, overlooking the town, the property of a deported prisoner of war, and the brilliant golden sunshine of the Free State spring, the purple wistaria is bursting into flower, and the trailing vines are pushing out their earliest tender shoots of green, while in the neglected garden-plot below, which a gang of Kaffir convicts is rapidly clearing of sporadic boulders and much long-accumulated rubbish, the peach and apricot trees are flaunting their crowded masses of pink, white, and crimson blossom. In a week the lattice of the verandah will be

covered with a luxuriant entanglement of foliage and flowers—a grateful shade from the ever-strengthening sun. For here in South Africa green things grow apace. It does not take a century to build a tree; mighty blue gums with towering pyramids of dark metallic green and gnarled old trunks are here children of fifteen years' growth; pines, firs, and cone firs of many varieties, now fine sturdy trees ten or twelve feet high are only baby saplings of four or five short summers; even the giant oaks and huge spreading willows, trees of sluggish growth, which lend to Pretoria its air of respectable antiquity and sylvan beauty, amid the grey tin roofs and shanties of yesterday and the mushroom plate-glass windows of to-day, were but acorns and withies some thirty years gone by.

There are few more notable mysteries in this strange, broad, treeless land of barren rock and rolling veldt, where the only natural arborage is supplied by the mimosa thorns along the river-beds and the sparse, rough

bushes on the kopje sides, whose stunted growth is the result of many, many years of hard struggle for existence, than the fact that one has only to plant a tree, shrub, or creeping plant from an alien soil, and supply it with an occasional drink of water, and it will shoot and spring and grow and flourish as never in its native land had any of its kind before.

From this coign of vantage the whole of Bloemfontein town lies open to the view, spread out in the hollow of a rolling valley between Monument Hill in the south and the steep ridge of Newal Hill that guards it on the north ; and everywhere spring up the dark spires of eucalyptus and the delicate green willows amid the grey galvanised roofs of the low one-story houses ; even the public buildings, the two-spired Dutch church, the "Grey" College, the Presidency, and the Raad-Zaal boasts no other covering. This corrugated iron is the artistic bane of the country. Every house in every town is roofed with it, and it is unmitigatedly hideous.

The outskirts of Johannesburg and Pretoria are mere ragged collections of tin shanties, being all composed of the same material. In Bloemfontein it is only from above that the eye is troubled with it, for outside the main streets most of the houses are neat verandahed bungalows, quite pretty with their red brick walls and roving creepers, and from the level ground the roofs do not greatly show. In Johannesburg they mostly paint these roofs brick red, and this almost gives the effect of tiles ; but not quite. Here they leave them naked in all their bare hideosity.

Meantime the regiment is still resting at Pretoria. The last march from Friedrichstadt, around through Rustenburg and thence to the capital, was in many respects its hardest. Two hundred and twenty-four miles in fourteen days is the official record. Seldom was the daily trek less than twenty miles. Never was *réveillé* later than 4.30 a.m., and often earlier. Luckily food was fairly abundant, for occasional convoys, in one case at least a derelict rescued from the enemy's

clutches, were encountered on the road. The remnant that remained for the final rush was the survival of the fittest; nearly half the efficient strength of the regiment were left at Bank, on the Rand Railway, for lack either of boots for their feet or sound feet to put into their books. All that were weak or sick also stopped behind. And so scarcely a man fell out on that long and rapid march, and practically the whole of the gallant three hundred who set out from Bank Station on the wild-goose chase of De Wet hunting on foot, arrived fit and well, though worn and weary to the bone, at Pretoria, with over a thousand miles to their credit, without encountering any considerable body of the enemy or experiencing any serious fighting to check them on the march. Here is a list of the different camping grounds from Bank to Pretoria: August 9th, Bank; 10th, Uberholzer; 11th, Velverdiend; 12th, Rietven (Mooi River); 13th, Zwart Kop; 14th, Cyperwater; 16th, Leeuwfontein; 17th, Brakfontein; 18th, Twee River; 19th,

Rustenburg ; 20th, Hoedspruit ; 21st, Vool-hunter's Kop ; 22nd, Rietvlei ; 23rd, Pretoria—224 miles in all. "Walker London" is still to the fore!

The contingent that remained at Bank under Lord Albemarle's command, though bootless, were not without their special relaxations.

One of the guerilla bands that were scouring (without soap) that still unsettled district around the ancient Dopper capital, Potchefstrom (probably De Wet himself again slipping southward), sent in at break of dawn their now familiar demand to surrender in half an hour with the alternative of extermination by an overwhelming force. "Exterminate away," was Lord Albemarle's reply, "and start at once, half-hours are precious." That half-hour passed ; it was a thrilling half-hour. And then—nothing happened. The overwhelming force had remembered a previous engagement. Possibly some of it remembered sundry previous engagements at Doornkop and elsewhere, and acted upon

that remembrance. Soon after this, orders came to rejoin the main body, and so booted, slip-shod, or barefooted, the half battalion started on their northward tramp once more, and in due course arrived intact at Pretoria.

Meanwhile the details from Germiston, those who had paraded sick at Springs, and had recruited their constitutions in the interim, and all the recovered patients from the Johannesburg hospitals, save such as had been invalided home, had come in; and to crown all, the new draft fresh from England, over one hundred strong, had joined the regiment, all eager and spoiling for a fight, with their fresh, clean uniforms, their new boots, new rifles, new belts, and new kit.

There is a story current here anent the nice new draft, that in passing through Bloemfontein, a certain senior non-commissioned officer thereof paid a visit to the little camp of the C.I.V.'s on duty in the town. These fortunate details are revelling in the luxury

not only of tents to sleep in but also a mess-tent, with real seats and a practicable table, and ample and excellent supplies of bread and meat and jam and cheese, and all regulation extras as rations. But new uniforms are neat and tidy, and the bench in the mess-tent, though really clean, was not too sightly. And so, when invited to partake of the goodly fare provided by a benevolent Government for soldiers who are *not* at the front, and to seat himself at the hospitable board, the smart and soldierly sergeant did produce a clean white handkerchief from the sleeve of his spotless frock and spreading it daintily on the bench sat down thereupon with care and circumspection to his midday meal. I do not think he would take the trouble now.

Thus once again the whole infantry battalion of the C.I.V. is gathered together in full strength and is ready once more to go anywhere and do anything ; though, to tell the truth, with the exception of the latest arrivals, it is readiest of all to go home.

And once again rumour pervades the camp that "next month" will see it on its homeward way.

Nor is this report entirely without information; for orders have been sent far and wide for all stray details and odds and ends throughout the country "whose services can be dispensed with" to rejoin at once, those north of Orange River to proceed forthwith to Pretoria, and those south of it to Cape Town.

While thus waiting in anxious expectation for the next movement, the men are growing sleek and fat on the rest and refreshment of a standing camp. Tents have at last arrived, and the camp-kitchen is again established on a comparatively permanent basis. Individual cooking is discouraged, and cleanliness has again become a necessity in place of an almost unattainable luxury. Mails come to hand regularly, including many belated parcels of clothing, chocolate, tobacco, and other dainties. What would we not have given for some of these in

the bad old days of trek-ox and mealie flour!

But it is always so. An army goes out to war in a distant land. Those who remain at home are filled with patriotic zeal and well over with generous contributions both private and public for the comfort and well-being of the soldiers at the front. Money in abundance is subscribed and stores in immense quantities are despatched by military post for the use of the marchers. Details, drafts, troops at the base and on the lines of communication receive all they can desire; they wax fat and kick; while the stores and dépôts and post-offices from base to rail-head are choked with piles of goods of which the intended regiments never see a sign until they are on their way home again. Then they are more than lucky if they receive half of what has been sent out; for these ramparts of derelict comforts are open day and night to the looter and the pilferer. For what says the Prophet Kipling? "We're all of us thieves," and the art of

commandeering is not confined by any means to goods belonging to the enemy. Here is a suggestion. Of all moneys collected for supplying the deficiencies of the Commissariat Department, which always is and always will be hopeless, let one-half at least be set aside for conveying the articles purchased by the other half to those for whom those articles are destined. Let a good man be found, a man experienced in conveying goods in the country where the fighting is going on, a man skilled in tackling transport officers and R.S.O.'s, an honest man and an energetic man. He must be paid for, but he will be worth it. Give him a free hand for the acquiring and organising of transport, and force the hands of the department by the lever of public opinion to grant free permission for such transport laden with such carefully assorted supplies to accompany the various columns, the actual marching and fighting columns. Then less stores will be sent out by at least one-half, but more will get to the front

by anything above three-quarters. There will be somebody responsible if anything goes wrong, and somebody whose while it will be worth to see that things do not go wrong. Is there not the germ of an idea in the above?

Well, once again is the infantry battalion of the C.I.V. encamped together in full fighting strength, even as it foregathered at Cape Town more than six months ago. It is a different body of men in many respects to what it was then. Then it was an experiment, now it is an object-lesson. Then its reputation was on the knees of the gods, now it is an accomplished fact. Then active service was a romantic mystery, now it is a prosaic commonplace. But it is not to generalities alone that these changes have been confined ; they have been equally remarkable with reference to the individual members of the regiment. Of the officers who came out with us but a minority remain with the battalion. One—Lieutenant Alt—has met a glorious death on the field of

270 1000 MILES WITH THE C.I.V.

battle, and another—Captain Barclay—has gone home bearing the newly-healed scars of a serious wound; three or more have been invalided home through sickness; while five at least have been granted commissions in the regular forces and have left to join their new regiments at home, in India, or at the front. Our own small cyclist section of Inns of Court Volunteers affords a still more curious instance of the eventualities of warfare. We have lost not a man by death or wounds, though two have fallen prisoners while carrying despatches through De Wet's own special hunting grounds, but have luckily escaped from his clutches; and with two exceptions there has been no sickness among us. But now, of the nineteen that left England, but five remain with the regiment, three have secured their discharges and returned home on urgent private affairs; under the powers especially granted to our Colonel by Lord Roberts after the occupation of Pretoria two have just gone back to finish their terms at

Oxford and take their degrees. One, our officer in command, Lieutenant Hole, is now secretary to the Military Governor at Bloemfontein ; another, Private Mosley, has been appointed Assistant Crown Prosecutor at Johannesburg with rank of Lieutenant, and "with him" is Private Renshaw as Clerk of the Arraigns, while the writer is now acting as Crown Prosecutor for the Orange River Colony and Assistant Chief of Police at Bloemfontein. Four have received commissions in the regular army and are now with their regiments, and one, alas ! is lying dangerously sick at Johannesburg of pneumonia caught during a long night's ride with despatches in the neighbourhood of Friedrichstadt. The remaining five have been worked for all they were worth, not only on behalf of the regiment, but also by every General, from Lord Kitchener downwards, to whose command the regiment has been from time to time attached, until both men and steeds were thoroughly worn out ; and now, not before they were wanted, they

have at last received their spare machines, which had been held in reserve at Cape Town.

Many another private and N.C.O. from the various companies of the battalion are now officers in other regiments. A goodly number, owing to their technical experience, are employed in responsible positions on the Imperial and Colonial telegraphs and railways from the Cape to Pretoria. In short, the City Imperial Volunteers has proved itself a famous cover to draw for useful persons to assist in the civil and military administration of the newly conquered country.

Whether there is still more marching or fighting in store, or whether report at last speaks truly, and after rest and refreshment at Pretoria the orders will come for home, and whether the homeward route will be direct through well-known tracks to Cape Town, or, as is suggested, *via* Laing's Nek and Natal to Durban, whereby the troops might see something of the scenes of the

great struggle round Ladysmith and Colenso and the old historic battle-grounds of the former war, is yet uncertain; but, in any event, it cannot be long now before the end arrives, and the regiment returns to receive the verdict of those who sent it forth, upon the way in which it has accomplished the work it went so far a journey to undertake.

I venture to think the verdict will be a favourable one.



## ENVOI.

FOR once during the eight eventful months of our military career Rumour has not lied.

Ever since the occupation of Pretoria in June this fickle purveyor of untrustworthy intelligence has told us "on the highest authority," with all circumstantial details, that we were going home "early next month." For a quarter of a year that story has proved false, but in the nature of things such a prophecy was bound to fulfil itself at last. And lo ! it has come to pass. The City Imperial Volunteers have left the seat of war. To-day they embark at Cape Town, homeward bound. Before the month is out the mother city will receive her sons again.

No further warlike tasks fell to the lot of

the infantry battalion after its third and last entry into Pretoria, more than a month ago. Mild garrison duties, the ordinary routine of camp life, succeeded to the long-drawn-out period of storm and stress ; and at last amid these peaceful closing scenes the other branches of the force, to wit, the Artillery and Mounted Infantry, were incorporated into one body with their unmounted brethren, and for the first time in its existence the complete regiment paraded together under Colonel MacKinnon's command in the capital which they had helped to capture, the capital of a state now once again and for all time an integral part of the British Empire.

On the eve of its departure from Pretoria the combined regiment was inspected by Lord Roberts, who spoke kind and flattering words ; and thus in a fitting manner ends the campaign of the C.I.V. The curtain is down, nought remains but the verdict of the audience. What will that be ?

## APPENDIX

I HAVE just been reading in the *Cape Argus* a most interesting article, transcribed from the *Daily Mail*, and therefore familiar to countless thousands at home, by that very clever American journalist, Julian Ralph, on the quality and value of "British Valour."

Now, observant and instructive as this essay assuredly is, it is written by an author who, in spite of himself, cannot help being picturesque any more than he can avoid rendering his description of absorbing interest, and getting right there with his readers every time. And consequently it seems to me that in the general effect he just misses the very point which he has set himself to elaborate namely, the strangely prosaic and commonplace nature of his subject-matter. During the present campaign I have had the good fortune to make acquaintance, not infrequently, with this most interesting phenomenon, so ably but not, as I hold, quite adequately dealt with in the article in question, and it is truly a curious and entertaining study.

Individual courage naturally varies, and must vary in quality with the character of its possessor. Heroism is the privilege of the few, it is often the product of opportunity. But taking the subject collectively, and judging from personal observation, I do not think that

there is a very wide margin of difference in this respect among the majority of Englishmen as such.

The valour, however, of "The Celtic Fringe" seems certainly to partake of a distinct nature from that of the mere Englishman. Whether it be Scottish or Irish, it is more ardent, more romantic, and consequently more useful to the war correspondent, or the writer of the short story; but I very much doubt whether even at its best it is quite so solid or quite so valuable in the long run as the truest type of the English-made article—and, be it noted that belonging myself by birth to this said "Celtic Fringe," I cannot be accused of prejudice in the matter.

Therefore in trying to arrive at a true conception of British valour as a whole, a searcher after truth ought to be careful to differentiate between the courage of the Englishman and that of the Scotsman or Irishman; and now that the territorial system is beginning to tell, and the crack Highland Regiments at any rate are at last becoming composed principally of Scotsmen, with a large leaven of the true Gael among them, the dividing line is growing rapidly more marked. And this is one point, I think, in which strenuous writers like Mr. Ralph are somewhat led astray by endeavouring to reconcile the picturesque charge of the kilted Highlander with the prosaic advance of the trousered and putteeed Cockney, and to draw their conclusions from the artificial blend.

Now in civil life, while the actualities of war were hidden and awesome mysteries, and daring deeds on the stricken field surrounded by a halo of romance, one had read one's Stephen Crane, and one had read one's Rudyard Kipling, and wondered. "The Red Badge of Courage" is a thrilling work. It describes the sensa-

tions of the young American volunteer in his first important action. During three parts of the two days' hard fighting he wanders about in a state of hysterical funk, and during the fourth, having somehow rejoined his regiment, he performs what are suggested to be prodigies of valour, in a mental condition of hyper-hysterical desperation. I do not believe that Americans, though an excitable race, are apt to fight that way. It was not the method adopted by Roosevelt's "Boys" at Santiago. Anyway, the late Mr. Crane, whose loss we all deplore, was not there, and he wrote his wonderful romance all out of his own head. On the other hand, Mr. Kipling's life-like and inimitable tales deal, as a rule, with exceptional cases of individual heroism, with the special brand of courage peculiar to the Celt, or with that other and perhaps more exalted form of British valour which is equally characteristic of "The Blood," but which exhibits itself in resistance rather than in attack, and of which the defence of Mafeking, of Kimberley and of Ladysmith, afford the latest and not least brilliant examples.

Now what I want to try and do is to illustrate, however crudely, from a few instances which seem to bear on the subject, that so very commonplace class of courage which breaks out quite naturally in the average Englishman, whether veteran or recruit, regular or volunteer, when he has to face, in the course of his military duties (which he as naturally professes to dislike), a heavy and deadly fire of shot and shell; and to see if some more satisfactory analysis of the nature of the peculiarity can be deduced therefrom.

It was at Diamond Hill on the afternoon of the second day of fighting. The three battalions, which, in the absence of the Camerons, composed the 21st Brigade,

were advancing steadily side by side across an open valley, and up the steep, stony slope of the penultimate ridge of the enemy's stronghold. Company by company, at fifty paces' distance, the brigade pushed on, the whole extended man by man to intervals of ten paces, until the entire breadth of the shot-churned valley and the rugged, rock-crowned strip that faced it for a goodly mile of front was punctuated with long, dotted rows of men who advanced, lay down, rose, and advanced again with no less careful precision than the older days of shoulder-to-shoulder fighting could afford. Already the firing line of the C.I.V. in the centre of the advance had gained the ridge's rocky crest, and from the cover there obtainable were replying steadily to the enemy's fire ; when suddenly from far away on the right flank rang out the horrid sevenfold cough of a Vickers-Maxim, and a squealing flight of 1-lb. shells fell one beyond the other exactly between and directly enfilading the advancing lines of the Sherwood Foresters on our right, throwing up great geysers of red sand as they struck and burst. Then a pause—then again “ How—how—how—how ”—and another covey alighted in a long line a few feet behind a company which had just risen up and were moving slowly and regularly up the hill. Again another and another ; now a yard or two in front, now just shaving by a hair's-breadth, as it seemed, the heels of one or other of their steadily advancing ranks, and each time coming nearer and nearer to our own extreme right ; until it was borne in upon our apprehensive minds that the next discharge must be right in among us ; and we disliked the prospect much.

Now your pom-pom is the most blood-curdling of all the modern weapons of war. We had met him at the Zand River, and we had formed his very close acquaint-

ance at Doornkop ; and we knew. But during the whole of that *mauvais quart d'heure* of direct enfilade not a single man of those sturdy Derbyshires either turned round or hurried forwards as the vicious shells shrieked and burst behind him, nor did one single man pause or check in his advance when the deadly shower ploughed up the ground at his feet. From what I gathered later, to say nothing of personal sensations, I know that all ranks of the C.I.V. regarded those shells in anticipation with considerably more apprehension as they swept nearer and nearer to our lines, than was vouchsafed to a precisely similar visitation among our own ranks at Doornkop, or than was felt by the very men among whom they were then actually dropping, and some of whom they were tearing and mauling with the jagged splinters into which they burst on impact. And we blessed again that sweet field battery of ours which with one straight shell caused the grisly showers to cease, as soon as ever the tell-tale flashes could be accurately located. For those field guns when they shoot, shoot to hit.

Another instance. Scene the same. Time perhaps half an hour later, when the early evening sun was declining swiftly towards the western hill-tops. Our leading company had pushed forward on to the high, open plateau that stretched away beyond the rugged summit of the ridge, and were now lying prone and motionless, exposed to such a bitter and searching fire from the enemy's last line of defence that the General himself had forbidden for the time any further attempt at advance. Behind the sheltering rocks that crowned the ascent, and all adown the steep slope itself the remainder of the battalion lay flattened out among the boulders, with heads down, as they had been instructed,

like squatting partridges among the close-cropped stubble ridges. Intervals were well maintained, but the distances between the ranks had been greatly closed to bring the rear-most companies into comparative shelter from the clip-fired droves of Mauser bullets which whistled down the slope, and kept the open valley below continually a-dance with spurts of ruddy dust. And ever and anon from some distant eyrie on our left a well-aimed shell would speed howling diagonally through a gap in the summit-rocks, and skimming low above the prostrate lines of men would alight and burst just beyond the rearmost flank, in the sand of the plain below, now nearer now further away as charge or elevation varied, but always, as Euclid puts it, in the same straight line.

Now fortune had brought me in the course of the attack, and at the close of the last advance but one, to a point at which that unpleasant line was intersected. Having earlier in the day, as we came within effective range, extended the unemployed balance of our cyclists to fifty paces' interval from the right with strict injunctions not to get ahead of the firing line, to take as much cover as possible, and in Heaven's name not to bunch (our position on the field of battle being, strictly speaking, in the extreme rear, a rule more honoured in the breach than in the observance), I found myself at last lying very flat indeed on the right of the leading company but one, exactly in the line of fire of those too adjacent shells. And so, when the next and, as it proved, the final order to advance was passed along the line, I gave myself the command to "Left incline," and shouldering my hundredweight of bicycle and kit stumbled painfully up the rugged forty-five degrees of Mauser-swept slope

till the comforting lee-side of a sturdy sheltering rock on the ridge's top was gained, whence events might be watched in comparative security. And then, as I lay and lit my last "Three Castles," the expected for once happened, and a common shell, skimming a foot or two lower than the rest, lit and burst on the very spot which a few minutes ago I had pusillanimously quitted, and which now was occupied by the prostrate forms of a group of men who had advanced thither from the companies in rear. When the cloud of dust and *débris* cleared away there lay the men exactly as before with their heads still well down as prescribed by regulation, and the voice of an officer came ringing from the shelter of the rocks above them, "Anybody hurt there?" A few heads went up as if to look and see, but there was no reply. Again the officer hailed them, "Is there anybody hit?" and the heads went up a second time, and a little chorus of voices answered, "No, sir, we're all right," and down went the heads again. But now comes the point of the story. Scarcely had the little group assured itself of its safety than two men who were among the nearest to the narrow open space to which the hand of Providence had directed that bursting shell, after some preliminary wriggles, got up and began deliberately to wander around amid the ever-increasing hail of now disregarded Mauser bullets, and to search about for the pieces of that shell to put in their haversacks and take home to their best girls as souvenirs! The voices of the officer from the rocks, and the section-commander from farther down the line, were simultaneous in their roughly-put injunctions to them to resume the prone position, and down went the men, and down again went their heads as promptly as when on field-day practice the magic word "Cover"

causes the whole regiment to disappear, as it seems to a spectator, bodily into the earth.

One final instance to illustrate the distinction suggested above between the courage of the average Englishman and that of his Celtic brothers. It was both my privilege and my misfortune at the fight at Doornkop, outside Johannesburg, to find myself dangerously adjacent to the Gordon Highlanders when they made their notable charge, and to view the equally effective doings of my own regiment only from afar. Cyclist duties of an urgent nature, dictated by the General himself, had taken two of us earlier in the day from the extreme front to the extreme rear of the marching column, and when at last we had threaded our way back through the miles of struggling convoy to the fighting force, the battle was well under way.

Mounted men returning hastily from the battlefield to re-form for a wider turning movement here misdirected me, and, after learning the cheerful news that the C.I.V. were busy with a hopeless frontal attack, and were by this time "pretty well chawed up," I hurried in as best I could by the route indicated to find that the assault of the line of kopjes to which I had been sent had been assigned to the Gordons and Canadians on the left of the 19th Brigade, while the C.I.V. on the front and right of Bruce Hamilton's command were entrusted with the capture of another ridge which rose abruptly, at an obtuse angle thereto, away across a hollow to the left. Mistaking in the hurry the serge khaki of the Canadians for that of our own men, I failed to discover the error till I had come up with the right flank of the rear companies of the Gordons, whose leading ranks were now within 600 yards of the enemy's position, and were just preparing for the final assault.

And then the whole regiment arose and went on in one magnificent sweep right up that fire-scarred mountain-side, never pausing to lie down and fire, and utterly regardless of the hail of bullets that swept through their ranks and mowed down man after man, especially where, in the impetuosity of the charge, intervals and distances were lost and the men went up in far too crowded groups. It was a thrilling display of ardent valour, and it thoroughly, though with heavy loss, succeeded in accomplishing its object. Meanwhile, away to the west the City Imperial Volunteers, that regiment of half-trained Londoners, whose very existence as a fighting force was by way of being an experiment, not to say an advertisement, but whose marksmen's skill with the rifle when faced by the harmless necessary target was undoubted, was doing a similar work under equal difficulties, and with as adequate a result ; but doing it in quite a different way. The earlier stages of the fight were somewhat complex, and it behoved the main body of the regiment to remain prone behind such meagre cover as was available, while a series of movements, including an important extension of the line to the right, were being carried out under heavy fire. During this trying time of inaction our prostrate lines were completely enfiladed by an obtrusive pom-pom from the left, and heavily shelled by a field battery on the right front. But nevertheless our firing line continued to maintain a rapid, steady, and well-aimed fire on the enemy's positions. Nor was there a man in that firing line, or indeed in the whole regiment, but regarded his weapon with respect, if not affection, or who would be wont to fire it unless his sights were duly aligned on a definite object, his range carefully reckoned. Now I take it that it may safely be postulated that our cautious friend the enemy, when he finds

that the bullets of his opponents are always there and thereabouts whenever he raises his head to sight or his rifle to fire from behind the shelter of his rock, would be less likely to remain exposed sufficiently long to take a careful and deadly aim than when a force is advancing against him at an appreciable distance, however bravely, without firing a shot. And so again when the assault itself began, and the advanced ranks coming on by rushes still kept up their carefully directed fire, while the remainder following on took cover at intervals in the best available manner, it is but natural to suppose that his reply would be less deadly than if the whole regiment were to have charged *en masse*, without endangering his own much-cared-for existence. And so at last, when bayonets were fixed, and H Company charged with a panting cheer to the summit of the kopje, there remained no foe to shoot them down, and the position was carried with a loss entirely inadequate to the difficulties encountered. But be it noted that had the artillery fire at the start shaken the nerve of the regiment, or had the advance been checked upon the way, the results of the assault would have been sadly and widely different. The moral of the story is, I think, that in each case the method of assault employed was that which was best suited to the character of the troops engaged, that both regiments, Highlander and Cockney, adopted the tactics most congenial to their different types of courage, and that their leaders knew it.

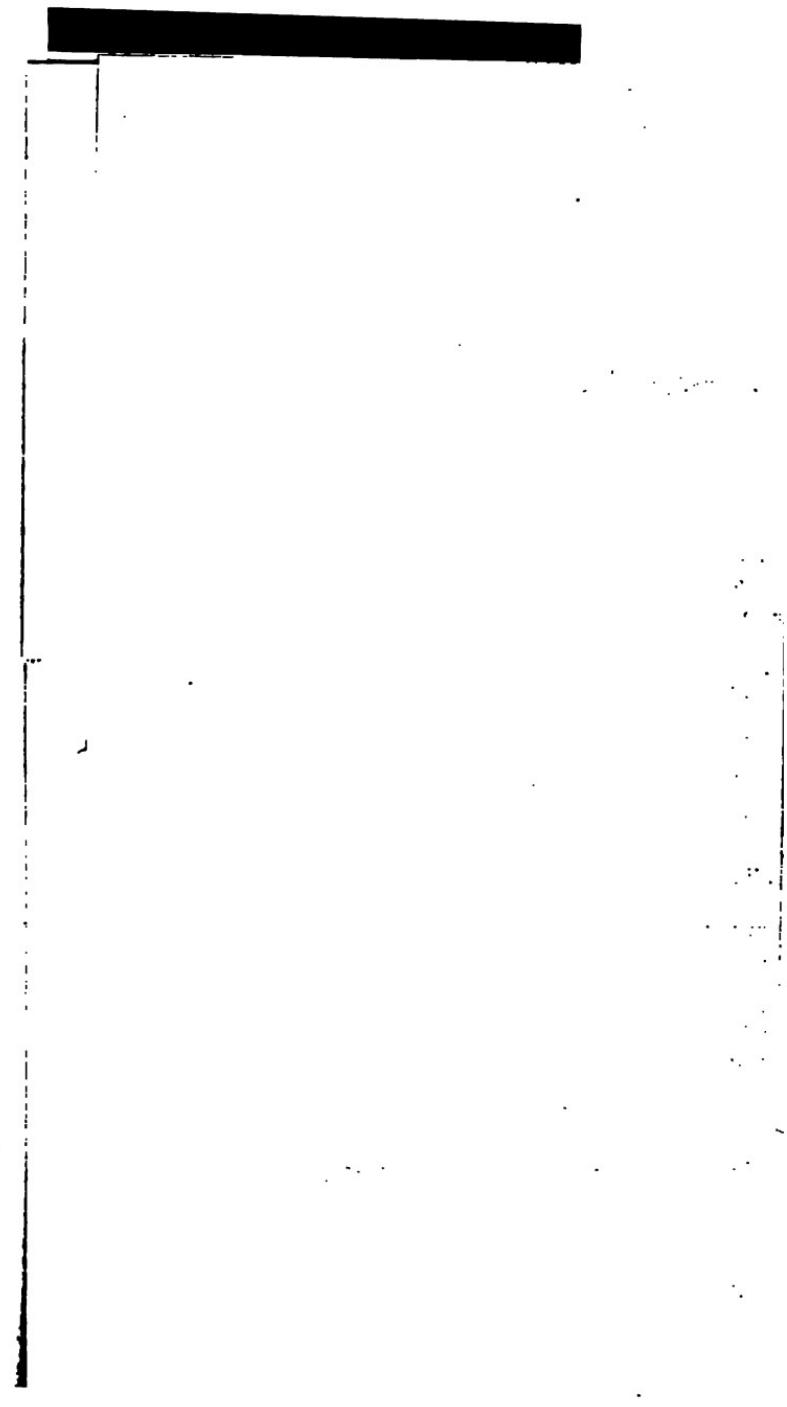
And now to try and draw conclusions. An English regiment is about to go into action—anticipations are undoubtedly unpleasant, and experience renders them more so. Imagination pictures gruesome possibilities; recollection only confirms them. Every soldier returning from the front will say to the eager novice spoiling

for a fight, "Don't you be too anxious about it ; I have been there, and I am 'fed up !'" (expressive phrase !) The advent of a stray shell or a few spent bullets in the early stages of the engagement are not hailed with delight. But when at last the dangerous zone is reached, when bullets are singing by in copious showers and the shells are shrieking and bursting among the ranks, these nervous feelings fade away, and there succeeds a calm disregard of the horrors of the situation, not quite dogged, not entirely callous, and certainly by no means heroic. One realises that the position is both dangerous and unpleasant, and one would rather not be in it, but being so, one does not so greatly object. There is a certain work to be done in a certain prescribed manner, and the suggestion does not arise that it should be avoided. The firing line has on the whole the best of the deal. The position is a trifle more risky, it is true, but not very much, while on the other hand the true elements of sport are there ; for there a man is being struck at, but he can hit back. And further, he has the absorbing interest, if properly framed, of trying to make his shots go home on the person of the enemy if possible, at any rate on the rock behind which that enemy is hidden. The enemy himself has become an abstraction ; he is no longer the hated personal foe, but is transformed into the mark which has to be hit, the game which is to be brought to bay. And then, when bayonets can be fixed and the final charge pressed home, there comes at last the old fighting feeling of "Let me get at him !" which, when genuine, carries all before it—and then Brother Boer entirely declines to play.

But in all this, whether in the active firing line or in the passive ranks behind, there is no sense of heroism, no thought of "dying for country or Queen," no high

sentiment, no ardent impetuosity. There is merely the business-like realisation of a nasty job that has to be carried through, tempered by a pleasing sense of sport, but rendered unpleasant by the danger of the situation, and saddened by the loss of comrade or of friend.

Such, as far as I have seen it, is the character of English valour; not dangerous surely to its possessors, as Mr. Ralph suggests, except when badly generalised or incompetently officered. When the strategy is sound, tactics good, and leadership competent, it will carry an army to victory with less loss than the dash of the Frenchman, the doggedness of the German, or the impetuosity of the Highlander. But when the leading is careless or indifferent it will drive those very troops to wounds and death, since it does not occur to them to do otherwise than carry out the commands which they receive.





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